

**ROY BLAKELEY'S
WILD GOOSE CHASE**

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

*** A Distributed Proofreaders Canada eBook ***

This eBook is made available at no cost and with very few restrictions. These restrictions apply only if (1) you make a change in the eBook (other than alteration for different display devices), or (2) you are making commercial use of the eBook. If either of these conditions applies, please contact a <https://www.fadedpage.com> administrator before proceeding. Thousands more FREE eBooks are available at <https://www.fadedpage.com>.

This work is in the Canadian public domain, but may be under copyright in some countries. If you live outside Canada, check your country's copyright laws. **IF THE BOOK IS UNDER COPYRIGHT IN YOUR COUNTRY, DO NOT DOWNLOAD OR REDISTRIBUTE THIS FILE.**

Title: Roy Blakeley's Wild Goose Chase

Date of first publication: 1930

Author: Percy Keese Fitzhugh (1876-1950)

Date first posted: Nov. 17, 2019

Date last updated: Nov. 17, 2019

Faded Page eBook #20191131

This eBook was produced by: Roger Frank and Sue Clark

ROY BLAKELEY'S WILD GOOSE CHASE

IMAGE OMITTED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

OH BOY, DID THAT GOOSE QUACK!

ROY BLAKELEY'S
WILD GOOSE CHASE

BY

PERCY KEESE FITZHUGH

Author of

THE TOM SLADE BOOKS
THE ROY BLAKELEY BOOKS
THE PEE-WEE HARRIS BOOKS
THE WESTY MARTIN BOOKS

ILLUSTRATED BY
CHARLES DURANT

GROSSET & DUNLAP
PUBLISHERS NEW YORK

COPYRIGHT, 1930, BY
GROSSET & DUNLAP

Made in the United States of America

CONTENTS

- I [SOMETHING IS WRONG](#)
- II [WE READ MY LETTER](#)
- III [THE SILVER FOXES REFORM](#)
- IV [MISTAKEN IDENTITY](#)
- V [“THE BEST LAID PLANS—”](#)
- VI [PEE-WEE’S VOW](#)
- VII [WE START A NEW START](#)
- VIII [THE ESCAPE](#)
- IX [HOW TO BECOME A SILVER FOX](#)
- X [WE SOUND BETTER “STILL”](#)
- XI [THREE RECRUITS](#)
- XII [THE FATE OF TWO GANDERS](#)
- XIII [PEE-WEE’S HOBBY](#)
- XIV [MAP OR BIRDSEYE VIEWS](#)
- XV [WHERE IS PEE-WEE?](#)
- XVI [TRACKING PEE-WEE](#)
- XVII [MURDER!](#)
- XVIII [DETAINED](#)
- XIX [THE CHURCH STEEPLE](#)
- XX [BUD’S PERSISTENCE](#)
- XXI [THE LETTER](#)
- XXII [4+3=7](#)
- XXIII [ON THE WATCH](#)
- XXIV [WEST BY THE COMPASS](#)
- XXV [BAFFLED](#)
- XXVI [AN ACCIDENT?](#)
- XXVII [PEE-WEE IN DANGER](#)
- XXVIII [AN EAGLE SCOUT](#)
- XXIX [SERIOUS BUSINESS](#)
- XXX [TWO HELPINGS](#)

ROY BLAKELEY'S WILD GOOSE CHASE

CHAPTER I

SOMETHING IS WRONG

Now I'm good and mad and maybe I won't even go on any more hikes until I take the next one because on account of a lot of trouble I had with scouts wanting to go hiking up at Temple Camp. If the Boy Scouts of America wanted to resign from me right now this minute I wouldn't stop them. I started a hike so nice and innocent like—you know the way I do—and it turned out to be a couple of dozen parades; gee they must think I'm the Ringling Brothers circus or something. Westy Martin says he should worry because I'm the one that started my patrol. Sure, and I'm going to be the one to finish it too. If it went the way I started it, it would hike to the North Pole and stay there.

Anyway, if any more scouts in the middle west or the middle south or the south end of the east or anywhere else write letters and want to take hikes with me I'll be happy to send them sticks of dynamite by parcel post. Or the middle north either; I don't care where they live. I don't even care if they live at all.

Jiminy crinkems, a joke is a joke but when you dump as much as the whole of starving Russia on one patrol leader, do you call that a joke? Ha, ha, can you see me laugh and look merry like scouts are supposed to do in the Handbook? Smile and look pleasant, that's what they say. Believe me, I'm smiling so much that I'm growling like a laughing hyena. You can't go by the picture of me on the books because that was taken just after school closed, it was taken from life. I wish some scouts were taken from life, too.

If you want to read this true story you can, only you do it at your own risk and you won't get much to eat because the only thing we had a lot of was nothing at all—oh, boy, we had plenty of that.

And another thing too, you needn't write and ask if I'm really alive because I'm very low and not expected to live—any minute I might die laughing. And if you want to know where I'm going next, I'm not going anywhere and you're welcome to go to the same place, many thanks, the pleasure is mine.

A lot of fellers write and say they like it when I kid Pee-wee Harris—that's my favorite outdoor sport. They say they like Pee-wee a lot when he's all excited. If you like him so much you can take him, you're welcome to him, and I wish he'd start a patrol in Siberia or Alaska or Mars or somewhere. Some fellers like Pee-wee in his scout suit. I like him in the

other end of China. They keep writing me letters and say they like it when Pee-wee and I are together. I wouldn't mind being with him if we had the Atlantic Ocean between us.

So now I'm going to start, and you needn't write and say you'd like to join my patrol like you're all the time doing, because already I've got eight too many. None at all is the best number, believe me. Take my advice, if you ever start a patrol don't have any members in it.

So now this is the beginning, and you'll know when you get to the end because that's where I'll stop. When I got up to Temple Camp with my troop there was a letter waiting for me up there. I guess the feller that sent it thought I didn't have any home. I've got a home but I don't use it much. All the time I keep getting letters from scouts. Lots of them make believe they're crazier than I am, on purpose.

Anyway, this one was from a feller that didn't want to take a hike with me because he was sick. I came running, merrily, merrily, from Administration Shack where they give you the letters and I kept shouting, "Here's a feller that doesn't want to go on a hike with me."

"I don't blame him," one of the fellers said.

I said, "He's been reading my stories about hikes and he's sick and can't go out."

"It's a wonder they didn't kill him," Doc Carson said. "Which one did he read?"

"How do I know," I said. "Maybe it was Robinson Crusoe; I wrote Robinson Crusoe—only I never got any answer from him. Anyway," I said, "it doesn't make any difference what one he read, they're all worse than each other. Pick out any one you want, you can't go right—the worst one is the best of all. I should worry, we have a lot of fun on them. And besides that," I told them, "the next one is going to be a special one; I thought of it when I was lying awake in the middle of the afternoon one night. All the hikes I ever went on started at the beginning. This one's going to start in the middle and go toward both ends."

"How are you going to get to the middle?" Warde Hollister wanted to know.

I said, "We don't have to get there, we're already there, that's where we start."

"You better tell Pee-wee Harris about that," El Sawyer said. "He'll go mad and we'll have to shoot him."

I said, "Listen, do you want to hear this letter from a feller that broke his funny-bone or his collar-bone or something, and can't go out. He's the only feller that ever wrote to me that doesn't want to take a hike. Come on down by the springboard."

CHAPTER II

WE READ MY LETTER

That's where we like to sit and string each other up at Temple Camp. We all sit along the springboard when nobody is diving from it—especially my patrol, because we always stick together on account of being crazy, a lot we care. This season it's all painted nice and new a kind of blackish white. Tom Slade painted it; it's a two coat job; he wore two coats while he painted it.

Doc said, "Keep your feet up out of the lake; after the rain last night the water's good and wet." He's our first-aid scout—he's an M.D. That means many deaths. A.D. means after dinner. B.C. means before campfire—you learn that in History. This year I take Ancient History—not saying where I'd like to take it to. I take the economic course, you're supposed to be economical, you don't waste time studying. Next term I take geometry. The thing I like to take best is vacation.

So there we were, all sitting along the springboard with our feet just out of the water. Most always that's the way we do when we first get to camp, before we get started doing regular things—you know what I mean, stalking and all scouting things like that. Anyway we're nutty, my patrol. There was a troop up there last summer from Maine, they were all maniacs, but they had a lot of sense compared to us. To show you how crazy we are we started a hike in a revolving door of a drug store and we didn't get back to camp for supper. That was named the Pinwheel Hike and you needn't say you want to come and join it because it only holds four fellers. That's a dandy kind of a hike, every scout has a compartment to himself.

Anyway, so there we were all sitting along the springboard while the rest of our troop were up in the cabin unpacking their stuff. Will Dawson and Warde Hollister and Doc Carson, those were the ones that were with me. Doc Carson is in the Elk Patrol, he's more to be pitied than scolded. He's a Life Scout but he'll be a dead scout if he sticks with that bunch, Grove Bronson and all those fellers, you know them.

"Let's hear the letter," Warde said.

"What's it all about?" Will wanted to know.

"I just got it in Administration Shack," I told them. "It's from a feller that lives in Crackerjack or someplace or other and——"

"Let's see it," Will Dawson said; gee, and he took it right from me.

"Claverack, that's the name of the place," he said. "Can't you read English?"

I said, “What do I care? If I go there, it’s the place I’m going to, not the name. Read what he says, he broke his collar-bone. That’s what you get from wearing a collar.”

“Will you listen while he reads it or won’t you?” Doc said.

So then Will Dawson read the letter. I’ve got that same letter now and so I’m going to paste it on the page with my writing, so maybe the printer will make it so it looks just like the real letter. So now you’ll see a letter just like the ones I get about twice a minute.

Blaverack N. Y.

July 4

Dear Roy Blakely

I hope you are really alive because I have a lot of good laughs at you and I'd like to join your patrol. I like the nutty hikes you get up. I can't go out because I broke my collar bone while I was chasing a cat. Just the same I'm getting better only I can't go out yet

My father says so long as you take hikes like that make you would be willing to hike here because its only about 10 miles from your big camp

I would like to know if Pee wee Harris is real too, he sure makes me laugh specially when you scouts hid him along and he sure does get excited. Oh boy I have to laugh at him. So if you pass through here on one of those hikes would you mind stopping so I can hear you hid Pee wee

Your friend
Edgar Chase

P.S. I'd sure like to be a scout

P.S. My mother says she'll give you refreshments, so sure come

P.S. My sister says you are only in story books and aint really alive.

"That sounds good about the refreshments," Will Dawson said. "Maybe that way we can show him we're alive."

Doc Carson got up to go away and he said, very serious like, "That would be a *blamed nice thing for you fellows to do*—go and see a poor chap that's laid up."

"Listen to who's making a noise like a scoutmaster," Warde said—"a blamed nice thing for you fellows to do." How can we go if we're not alive? Maybe that feller's sister knows what she's talking about, you can't tell."

"I never thought of that," Will said. "I'd like to know what his father thinks. We may be dead and not know it—look at the Raven Patrol."

Doc said, "Well I see you're not losing any time getting down to nonsense. So long, I'm going to unpack my suitcase. See you at eats."

So there were just the three of us, all triple-plated solid silver foxes broadcasting on a wave length of six gigglemeters.

"We ought to jolly Pee-wee along over the radio, then everybody'd be happy," Warde said. "Some Friday evening between ten and ten A.M. Do you think we could get him to a studio?"

"Sure," I told him; "just tell him studio is named after stew. I guess there'd be a riot, he'd throw the microphone at us."

"No but, honest," Will said, "a hike in one direction is just as good as a hike in another direction, isn't it?"

"A hike in one direction is even better than one in another direction," I said.

"Then why not hike to Crackerjack or whatever you call it?" Will asked. "It would be a kind of a good turn, wouldn't it?"

"How do I know?" I said. "It might be a straight road. I think it's across the Hudson River. If it isn't on one side of it it's on the other."

"I know where Havercrack is," Warde said. "You can see it on the map up in Administration Shack. It's across the river just about east of Catskill.

Maybe it's just about fifteen miles from here—it's a cinch.”

“All right,” I told them, “I don't care what becomes of me. I just as soon hike to Bric-a-brac as anywhere else. Who's going to go?”

“I am,” Will said.

“Same here,” Warde said.

“And how about the animal cracker?” I said. “If he knows what we want him to go for he won't go.”

“We won't mention that,” Warde said. “We'll just tell him about the refreshments. We'll tell him he's doing a good turn to a poor boy that broke his collar button.”

“It's a go,” I said.

CHAPTER III

THE SILVER FOXES REFORM

“Don’t tell anyone except Pee-wee,” I said, “because they’ll all want to go.” Because that’s the way it is on account of our hikes being so famous and nonsensical. A lot we should worry about what some people think. “I wish we could take him without him knowing it,” I said. “But I’m afraid if he went along he’d know he was with us.”

“He might suspect,” Warde said.

After supper, before we all went up to campfire, we got hold of Pee-wee just as he was coming up from the lake. He had on that scowl that he always carries around with him.

I said, “Hey listen, Sir Harris. Warde and Will and I are going to take a very important hike that has refreshments in it, and we want you to go with us, only we don’t want you to know you’re going.”

“We’re going to hike to Bric-a-brac or Crackerjack or Cadillac or somewheres,” Warde told him. “It’s about ten miles on the other side of the Hudson. We’re going on an important scout mission to visit the sick. If you want to go, break it to us gently.”

“I know what kind of a hike it is!” Pee-wee started hollering. “Already before you tell me I know what kind of a one it is! By the way you talk I know all about it.”

Will said, “Isn’t it wonderful how smart he is!”

“Hey, kid,” I said, “honest, no fooling, this is going to be serious. A poor boy broke his collar button chasing a cat and he lives in Claverack and he can’t go out and he wants me to hike and see him because his sister says I’m only in a story book and I’m not alive and his mother is going to serve eats if we go there. So you can see for yourself that this is a good-turn hike, and on the way back we’re going to turn into every road we come to—it’s called the Good Turn Hike.”

“Don’t miss it,” Warde said. “At last we’re going to have some sense, going to see a poor boy and cheer him up with laughing faces and merry jests, aren’t we, Roy?”

“Absolutely,” I said. “The way I feel now, I’m so sober like, I wouldn’t even string a string bean.”

Will kept a straight face and he said, “At last we realize that there’s something else in the world besides nonsense. We want to be helpful. Didn’t

you see how I helped myself to four crullers at supper? And I asked a little tenderfoot for a banana he had so as he wouldn't get indigestion."

I said, "Will, that was a kind act."

"Worthy of a boy sprout," Warde said.

I said, "Honest, young Harris, the Silver-plated Foxes have changed their policy. So do you want to go with us on a hike to see a poor invalid boy whose mother is going to pass around refreshments? If not, don't ever call yourself a boy scout again!"

Oh, boy, I had to laugh, the kid didn't know what to think. I guess he felt kind of shaky about it but anyway he said, "Let's see the letter."

I said, "Young Harris, a scout is to be toasted by his brother scouts. If he isn't toastworthy he can be asked to hand over his badge. I feel deeply defended that you don't trust a Silver Fox. We're asking you because you haven't got any patrol of your own."

"I'll go if you're really going to do that," he said. "But I'm not going on any crazy, nonsensical, idiotical hikes that are not hikes at all, where all you do is think of ways not to come home, and have everybody laughing at you—*no siree*. Geeee whiz, I had enough of that."

"It's the only thing you ever have had enough of," Warde said to him.

I said, "I don't blame Pee-wee at all; his parents are to blame if anybody. The trouble with us is we don't take scouting serially—we ought to read more serial stories. Now at last we're going to do something worth while."

Oh boy, the kid just stood there looking from one of us to the other; he didn't know what to think. Gee, you couldn't blame him if he didn't trust us, especially after some hikes we had. But the three of us kept very sober like, because that time for once we really wanted him to go. Because we wanted to kid the life out of him in front of that feller in Claverack. That's us all over, always out to do a favor. Why, even once I carried Westy Martin's duffel bag up from the station because he was tired—and he carried mine. That's the kind of scouts we are—full of helpings.

So long, I'll see you in the next chapter.

CHAPTER IV MISTAKEN IDENTITY

We didn't get started for a few days because when we first get to camp, *oh, boy*, there are so many things to do, you have to do them five or six at a time. All the while we never said anything to that bunch up there because if you tell these things around Temple Camp, good night, when you come to start you have about forty-leven scouts that want to go. Nix on that, I told Warde Hollister, this is going to be a Roy Blakeley hike, limited, all rights preserved—and wrongs too. Because on our hikes the wrongs count for just as much as the rights.

"Only three and a half scouts," Warde said; "you and Will and me, and the animal cracker."

"Sure," I told him, "it's just going to be a crusade to do a kind act, absolutely, positively." Anyway, I guess Pee-wee was kind of suspicious, because he went to Doc Carson and asked him if I really had a letter from a feller that was sick and couldn't go out. He would trust one of the Ravens when he wouldn't trust us. Doc told him, sure we were going to hike to do a good turn. And he told him not to mention it to anybody.

So then the kid came to us because good turns are his middle name; he reminds himself of a merry-go-round, he does so many good turns. He wore out three copies of the Handbook—he eats them alive.

He said, "If that hike is going to be a really truly hike to a destination and not a lot of crazy stuff going the wrong way on purpose and making idiotical rules to go by—if you cross your heart, then I'll go with you. But if it's going to be like your Happy-go-lucky Hike or your Funny-bone Hike, then I'm not going to be wasting my time with you."

I said, "This is going to be a serious hike, you can ask Warde if it isn't. All we're going to do is to hike to see a poor feller that's sick, and all we're going to do is things to please him. Gee, how would *you* like to be stuck inside the house like that, and nobody to go round with? Here's our chance, kid. You know what it says in the Handbook—a scout is a bother to every other scout——"

"You mean *brother*," he shouted. "Now I don't know whether you're serious or not. Are you going to turn to the right just because it says so on motorist signs when it doesn't mean people on foot at all—are you going to do things like that?"

“I wouldn’t think of such a thing,” I told him. “If I did it at all I’d do it without thinking. If you don’t want to go on a good turn hike, without any other kind of turns, you don’t need to. Only I thought you’d like to go with us on an errand that’s worth while, where there’s going to be refreshments.”

I guess he had a job making up his mind, but anyway he decided to go. So the next morning we started out good and early and got a hitch down to Catskill, the four of us. I knew where Claverack was, it was on the other side of the river about ten miles. It’s about the size of New York only smaller. If you get a good starter you can jump over it. Because I knew a feller that came from there. I don’t blame him. It’s right on the road and I bet some day an auto will run over it.

As soon as we got to Catskill the fun started—jiminies, I couldn’t help it. You know me, how serious and sober I am. There was the public school, and there was a sign on the road and it said:

DANGEROUS!
Children

Warde said, “I don’t see any dangerous children around. But you can never tell, this is a wild country. Maybe we better take a detour around through Pikeville—safety first.”

I didn’t say a word. But Will said, very innocent like, “These Catskill Mountain children are apt to be treacherous; a scout has to be on his guard. Suppose we take this road to the left around in back of the school, and that will bring us to Skunkville. There’s another sign, it says go carefully. Probably they’re hiding in the bushes.”

“*Now you’re starting! Now you’re starting!*” Pee-wee hollered at us. “Now you’re starting with your crazy nonsense! Even before you get across the ferry you start.”

So then we went on tip-toe past the school, all except Pee-wee. When we got down to the ferry the boat was full of Campfire Girls, gee there were about fifty of them.

“Oh look at the fiery camp girls,” I said. “Now we don’t need to be afraid, they’ll protect us.”

“Just in time,” Warde said.

So then we started running for the boat, and we forgot all about the ticket office and nobody stopped us. When the boat started a lady all dressed up like a girl scout came up to us and said, “You almost missed the boat, you boys. We’ve been waiting *ages* for you. When I saw you had scout suits on I *made* the man wait. Now I’m going to tell Margaret that you’re here. She’s

been just *worrying to death* for fear you wouldn't come." Then all of a sudden she went away.

I said, "I wonder what's the big idea."

"This ferry boat looks like a transport," Warde said. "I think these fiery camp girls are being sent to the front."

"Maybe they heard about our hike," I said. "Maybe they're all going with us to do a kind act."

Pee-wee just stared. He likes girls like I like homework. Oh boy, they were all dressed up like Pocohontas and Minnie Ha, Ha and Laughing Waters and Giggling Gingerale and a lot of those Indian girls.

Warde said, "What is this, a floating Indian reservation, or what? I'm afraid we're going to get scalped."

I said, "Get out your jack-knives and be ready for a massacre. Didn't I tell you these Catskill Mountains are dangerous? You won't catch me on a ferry boat again."

So then the lady came back with a girl all dressed up in khaki and buckskin and feathers and everything, and beads around her neck. She said, "Here are the boys at last. They were late. Now isn't that *just* like boys?"

The girl said, "Oh this is just too *silly*, they're not my cousins at all. And my brother doesn't look *anything* like *any* of them. They're not any relation to me at all."

"We knew it already, even before you told us," Pee-wee shouted.

I said, "It may be true, but can you prove it? And besides, anyway, if you don't mind we'd like to know what we're up against. I never heard any girl say such a thing to me before—that I'm not her cousin."

Warde said to her, "You don't look anything like my grandmother either, if it comes to that."

"Gee whiz, can we help it if we're not relations to you?" Pee-wee shouted.

The lady started laughing and so did the girl; especially the girl kept laughing, you know how they do. She said, "Oh it's just too *silly* for *anything*. Where do you think you're going, you boys? And scouts too; I should think you'd have better sense. Didn't you see the big sign on the gates? It said SPECIAL BOAT. This boat is chartered for the day and I'd like to know where *you* expect you're going."

"We were going across to Greendale," I said. "And then we were going on a very important and serious hike to Crackerjack——"

"He means Claverack," Pee-wee shouted.

"Well it doesn't make a single particle of difference *what* he means," the girl said, "because this boat is going ever and ever so far up the river to Marrowby's Grove and it's going to stay there all day. And my brother

waited for my two cousins to bring them along, and I don't know *where* in the *world* they can be."

The lady said, "When I saw these boys had scout suits on I naturally thought——"

"Oh, it's just too *ridiculous!*" the girl said. "Why they're no relation to me at all, and all I can say is that I'm sorry for their very important and serious hike, because it will be *ages* before they get back."

I said, "Do fiery camp girls and girl sprouts know anything about first aid?"

She said, "I should hope to tell you we do, Silly!"

"Well then please excuse me while I faint," I said to her.

"You can drop dead for all I care," Pee-wee shouted. "*Now* you see! *Now* you see! It's just like all the rest of your hikes. Now we're going to *never* get home."

"Isn't he cute!" another girl said.

I said, "Sure, and gentle too; he'll eat right out of your hand."

CHAPTER V

“THE BEST LAID PLANS—”

I said, “This is easy, all we have to do is change the name of it to the Marine Hike or Kidnapped by Indians. I bet a lot of fellers will buy it. I told you this was going to be serious.”

Pee-wee said, very grouchy, he said, “You were the one that was leading the way and you couldn’t even see a great big sign.”

“It wasn’t a scout sign,” I said. “I only go by scout signs. We’re here because we’re here—deny it if you dare. This is the celebrated Wrong Way Hike or Boy Scouts on a Ferry Boat.”

“Yes and how about Claverack?” the kid grouched. “*Geeeee whiz!*”

I said, “My idea about it is that it’ll stay right there and we’ll have to go to it. We’ll have to approach it from the north. One point of the compass is the same as another, only different. A good turn is a good turn no matter how you go to it.”

“Absolutely, positively,” Warde said.

“How far is that grove?” Will asked the girl.

She said, “It’s miles and miles up the river, and you can blame yourselves.”

I said, “Do you blame me because it’s miles and miles? Did we put it there?”

By that time there were a whole lot of girls around us, all laughing. Gee it was some picnic, I guess there were fifty of them. There were two or three grown up ones too, and they were all he-he-ing at us.

“Such a mistake to make!” one of them said.

I said, “That’s nothing, we’ve made better ones than that.”

“Look at your brother and your cousins, they didn’t even show up at all,” Will said.

Another one of them started up, “Oh goodness me, they couldn’t even look where they were going. And they *claim* to be boy scouts. Oh I could just die laughing.”

Warde said, “All right, Miss Sapolio, rub it in.”

“It’s because we’re kind of wild and primitive and we don’t know anything about ferry boats,” the kid started shouting. “Gee whiz, we were thinking about something very important, that’s why, and you needn’t think you’re so smart laughing because anyway we didn’t miss the boat, even we

didn't miss it by making a mistake, and it's better to catch it by mistake than to miss it accidentally by not getting to it."

I said, "You must excuse our little friend, he's missing on two cylinders."

"Shift into second, kid," Warde said to him; "that was a fine argument. It's better to catch a boat when you hadn't ought to, than to miss it accidentally on purpose——"

"Now you can see they're crazy!" the kid yelled. "That's the way they are all the time. Now we're never going to get home—all the time I knew it!"

"I know it too," I said; "that shows how much boy scouts know. The Boy Scout movement spreads all over, it doesn't make any difference where you go. We can go home by the way of California, what do we care?"

One of the girls was laughing and she said, "Well, I hope you have good appetites."

I said, "Sure, we always carry them with us for an emergency. Our little mascot carries two so in case he gets lost they'll last him several days. He's a real scout, he knows all about the birds of the sea and the fish of the fields—he's so wild he won't even pick tame flowers. That's why we go on wild goose chases, we're so wild."

All the time the boat was going up the river and all the girls were talking to us. Anyway, we were having a dandy sail.

I said, "Do you know how we can get to Claverack from that grove?"

One of them said, "You'll have to walk all the way back; it's miles and miles. But, one thing, you'll be on the right side of the river when you land. You can have lunch with us in the grove and then you can hike back unless you want to wait and come back on the boat with us. Isn't it just too *absurd*? You can spend the whole day with us if you *really* want to."

Warde said, "We're glad of it, we have a ride part of the way. We thought we'd have to hike all the way to Claverack."

Pee-wee piped up, "Do you call it getting a ride part way when all the time we're going the wrong way? Geeeee whiz, do you call that logic? We're sailing way, way up the river and it goes north, and all the time we want to go east! Do you call that having a ride part way?"

Oh boy, all the girls were laughing at him. One of them said, "Oh I think he's just too dear."

"You couldn't get him any cheaper," Will said. "Already he's marked down, that's why he's so short; he'd be dear at any price. He's the pet of Temple Camp."

I said, "As long as we're on the boat we'll stay to lunch up at that grove and then we'll hike southeast to Claverack; we're going to call on a poor

boy that broke his collar button.”

They said that was fine, and they were going to have chicken sandwiches and olives and sponge cake and everything. And they were going to cook waffles and hot dogs, *mm-yum, yum!*

Warde said, “Hey, camp scouting girls, Pee-wee is so dumb he thinks sponge cake is made out of sponges, I’ll leave it to these fellers.”

I said, “Sure, you’d be surprised how ignorant he is, he even thinks pie is named after pioneer, I’ll leave it to Warde. His favorite pie is all kinds especially apple. Even once he went fishing for fishballs. He’s a model scout—model means *small sample*, I can prove it by the dictionary. We keep him at Temple Camp to do his family a good turn. But you want to look out for him, he’s a terrible sheik. He wins a smile from every girl, most always they laugh out loud. He’s got more members outside of his patrol than any other scout in America. The girls all fall for him and we have to stand for him.”

“Don’t you mind them,” one of the girls said to him, very nice and affectionate like. “They’re just *boobies*.”

“Do you think I don’t know it?” Pee-wee shouted. “They said they were going to go on a serious hike to call on a sick feller and now they’re making fools of themselves before a lot of girls—showing off. Gee whiz, they were going to go and do a kind act and then they land on a ferry boat——”

“Look at Columbus,” I said; “did he know where he was going? He thought he was going to India and he bumped into Columbus Circle, I’ll leave it to my scout comrades. Even we’re doing as much as Henry Hudson did, we’re sailing up the Hudson River, and still he’s kicking.”

“Even it may be *years* before we get back now,” Pee-wee said.

“Follow us and you can’t go right,” I told him. “Every which way, that’s our motto. Scouts aren’t supposed to carry anything they don’t need, not even directions—we should worry.”

The girl that was named Margaret was laughing and she put her arm around him and said, “Don’t you mind them, they’re just too silly. And they can’t lead you wrong now because they’ve *got* to stay on the boat till it lands.”

“Gee whiz, they make me sick,” Pee-wee grouched.

CHAPTER VI PEE-WEE'S VOW

We had a dandy ride going the wrong way. They gave us some eats before we got up to that grove, so we could start right off as soon as the boat landed. Anyway, we didn't want to be hanging around with a lot of girls all day. A lot of them were going to pick flowers and press them in books. But, oh boy, they fell for Pee-wee.

So then we started all over again for Claverack. I guess we were about ten miles upstream. But anyway we had got across the river.

"That's one good thing," I said; "we did what we wanted to do, we got across the river. Now all we have to do is to go back down."

"You call that one good thing?" the kid shouted. "How we go miles and miles and miles and miles north, when all the time we want to go east!"

"That's a good argument of Pee-wee's," Warde said. "We really have more miles than we need."

"It's good to have plenty," I said. "When you start on an important and serious hike, you should have a lot of miles in case you run short of them."

"You should have some sense, too," the kid said, as he was hiking along with us with a scowl all over his face. "You shouldn't be a lot of idiotic, insane idiots. Gee whiz, especially when you start out with a serious mission."

"Where's the mission?" Will asked him.

"*It's in Claverack!*" the kid yelled at him.

"Then we didn't start out with it," Warde said.

"You make me sick," said Pee-wee.

"Warde is right," I said; "you do it by long division. If you already have a mission there's no use going to one. This hike is superfluous."

"You got that word out of a book!" the kid screamed at me. "You try to make fellers think you're smart when you write a lot of nonsense and call it a story."

I said, "When better hikes are built Roy Blakeley will build them. Ask the boy who reads one."

"They don't even have any pilots," Pee-wee said, very disgusted. "And this is like all the rest of them just like I knew it would be. I was a big fool when I came with you."

"We're on a mission of mercy," Warde said.

“Sure, we’re bringing joy to the sick. We remind ourselves of Pershing—*Edgar Chase, we are here.*”

“You better wait till we get there,” the kid grouched.

All the time we were hiking south on a road along the river. Gee, I guess we hiked for about a couple of hours. We passed through a couple of villages. Then after a while we came to the highway that goes east and west. That is the road we would have hiked on if we had gone straight across in the boat. All of a sudden along came a car going east. It was a bakery car and it said on it,

PETERSON’S PIES
CLAVERACK
N.Y.

So I called out and said, “Hey Peterson’s Pies, will you give us a ride to Claverack?”

Warde said, “We have no business to get hitch hikes from people we don’t know.”

I said, “It’s all right, I’m well acquainted with pies. And they’re no strangers to Pee-wee either.”

The man said, “Hop in; you goin’ to Claverack?”

So then we all got in and I said, “Sure we are, if we don’t change our minds.”

“You mean if we don’t *lose* our minds,” Pee-wee piped up. “*Absolutely, positively, surely, definitely*, I’m not going to get out of this car till it gets to Claverack—*gee whiz*, I’m tired walking.”

“That’s the way to talk,” the man said—he was an awful nice man, I suppose on account of being with pies all the time. He said, “I’m the baby to get you there.”

“We’re in luck,” Warde said.

All the time Pee-wee didn’t say anything at all,—I guess he was kind of sore on account of us kidding him. I guess he was tired, too; I know I was. He and Will were sitting with the man, and Warde and I were in back sitting on a crate.

After a while the railroad tracks started running alongside the road and I said to Pee-wee, “Hey kid, a good idea would be for us to get out and walk the rest of the way on one of the rails, and the first one that goes off has to buy ice-cream cones when we get there.” Gee, I said it to him two or three times and he didn’t pay any attention.

Warde said, “How about it, kid?”

“Absolutely, positively, surely, definitely I’m not going to get out of this car till it gets to Claverack,” the kid said, very sure and dignified like. “So you needn’t start any of your nonsense. And when we get there I’m going to have something more to say, too, before we get to that feller’s house. You needn’t think I’m going to see you start a lot of that stuff in front of him. We’re going to be serious, like you said. And you got to promise, too. So do you promise, cross your heart, that when we get there you’ll have some sense so he won’t think scouts are crazy? Like you said before you started—will you?”

I said, “Absolutely, we’re visiting the sick.”

“Gee whiz,” he grouched, “you said we were going to have a serious hike for once, and not a lot of crazy stuff, going on a serious mission.”

I said, “Just you wait and see how I act when we get to Claverack, kid; just you wait and see. You’ll think I’m a cross red nurse going to visit the sick. Hey Warde?”

“Sure,” Warde said, “from now on we’re going to be sensible.”

All of a sudden, standing ahead of us were a lot of cars; they were alongside the road. And there were a couple of men with badges on, stopping cars as they came along. The bakery man said, “Good night, it’s the inspectors, and I ain’t got my license cards.”

So then we had to stop. They were making every driver show his cards and if he didn’t have them he had to leave his car there and go and get them. Anyway that’s what the bakery man had to do. Some of them that lived way far off got tickets.

“You mean I got to hoof it all the way to the village?” he asked the inspector.

The inspector said, “That’s what; you’re supposed to carry your cards with you.”

Oh, but that driver was good and sore, but anyway he had to go. He said he was sorry for us because now we’d have to walk. Anyway, he got a hitch with a man in a Ford. He said he was going to have his lunch before he came back.

I said, “It’s too bad, we might get a hitch too, only on account of Pee-wee’s solemn vow. A boy scout’s honor is to be toasted; we have to stay in this car till it gets to Claverack.”

“You’re crazy!” Pee-wee shouted.

“If a scout gives his word that he’s going to do a thing, he does it, I’ll leave it to Warde and Will,” I said.

Warde said very sober like, “Absolutely; we have to stay in this car till it gets to Cloverdale.”

So then we started making up rhymes and singing them like we always do to get Pee-wee's goat. He just sat there with a scowl all over his face, not saying a word. All the while we were singing crazy stuff like this:

“We're going to Claverack
And we never will get back.

We'll have a good long tramp
Before we get to camp.”

Jiminies, everybody around there was laughing at us, even the inspectors.

CHAPTER VII

WE START A NEW START

We just kept sitting there for about fifteen minutes till Pee-wee started to boil over. He was so mad he wouldn't even look at us. All the time we kept talking to each other, not paying any attention to him at all.

I said, "It's a fine thing, the Boy Scout movement, how if a scout says he'll do a thing he does it no matter what."

"Sure, it's a fine movement only it hasn't got much movement to it," Warde said.

Will said, "We may be here for years. Anyway, we've got plenty of pies, we won't starve."

Pretty soon another man that had to show his license card called to us and asked us if we were going to Claverack, so then we got a ride to the village. All the while Pee-wee was good and mad. As soon as we got out of the auto in Claverack he said, "I give you fair warning if you start anything crazy in front of that feller we're going to see, I'm going to start away and hike home by myself."

"Is that a promise?" I asked.

"It's a fair warning," he shouted.

We went in the post-office and asked the man where Edgar Chase lived, and he told us in a white house up the road that had a picket fence around it and a well on the front lawn and a big stone for a carriage step. When we got up there, there was a feller sitting on that carriage step eating a banana.

I said, "Pardon me, excuse me, will you please tell us if this is a white house with a well on the lawn."

Pee-wee kept nudging me to have some sense, but what did *I* care?

The feller said, "What color do you think it is?"

"How do *I* know?" I said. "I go to night school and I can't see in the daytime. I bet your name is Edgar Chase; is it?"

He said, "Sure it is."

I said, "I'm Roy Blakeley that you wrote a letter to and I came to tell you that I'm alive; if you don't believe it you can ask these fellers. Two of them belong in my patrol and this other one is Pee-wee Harris, known as the Bridgeboro giant, otherwise the animal cracker of Temple Camp, ex-leader of the Chipskunk Patrol. Do you want us to kid him along for you?"

Oh boy, I wish you could have seen that feller stare! I guess when he wrote that letter he thought he'd never hear from me. He just sat there

gaping at us.

Pee-wee said, "Maybe if you're all well again you'd like to join the scouts, and I can tell you all about it, how you track and stalk and everything and you needn't pay any attention to these fellers because they're crazy."

All of a sudden that feller jumped up and said, "Wait a minute," and he ran in the house.

Pee-wee said, "Now if you don't look out you'll spoil it all. He's an awful nice feller and maybe we can get him into the scouts. Maybe he'll come out and have a kind of a little hike with us and we can show him all about stalking and pathfinding and everything—I bet he's a dandy feller. Do you want him to think we're a lot of lunatics? Gee whiz, maybe here's our chance."

"Listen to who's starting a new patrol," I said.

Just then out came the feller again and his mother was with him, smiling all over. She said, "So this is really Roy Blakeley and his friends, and you're *real live* boys. And Edgar tells me you've hiked all the way from camp to see him. Isn't that wonderful? And he's so glad that he wrote to you. You know he's just recovered from an accident and he's so happy to be out."

"I like your crazy hikes," Edgar said, "I like all the crazy things you do. Will you let me go with you on a hike if I bring a goose?"

"You mean a cooked one—to eat?" Pee-wee asked him.

I said, "You must please excuse our young friend, he was born during a famine, he thinks every day is Thanksgiving. He has a couple of appetites, and when one is satisfied he uses the other; he's never without one. If you could bring a couple of roast pigs we might let you come."

The lady said, "Well, I guess we'll have to test your appetites with lemonade and cake."

So then she went in the house and we all sat around talking while we were waiting. He was an awful nice feller, that Edgar Chase. And, oh boy, but he was glad to see us. He just kind of kept staring at us as if he didn't know if we were real or not. He said he never really thought that he'd ever see us. Pretty soon his mother came out with lemonade and cake and she said she knew that boy scouts always liked refreshments. She said she thought it was good and funny of us hiking there on account of her son's letter. She said we should stay and get acquainted with him. After she went in the house we started talking about hikes. He said he liked crazy ones like we have. Oh boy, you should have seen Pee-wee. He said, "You mean you like nonsensical nonsense?"

"Sure I do," Edgar Chase said. "All the while I was sick in bed with my shoulder I was trying to think up crazy hikes. I thought of one where you walk backwards. But anyway will you take a hike with me this afternoon?"

You just came at the right time because I've got to take a gander to a farm about three miles through the woods. We raise geese here and Farmer Quackenbush bought a big gander and I'm going to take it to him. Will you go with me?"

"Goodnight," I said, "how are you going to carry a goose? You mean it's alive?"

"Sure it's alive," he said; "it's a dandy great big one. I'm going to take it in my cart, and it's not much fun going alone."

"Sure, we can carry a goose," Pee-wee said. "Sure, we'll go and help you because, gee whiz, that's doing a good turn."

Warde said, "We can carry a goose outside of us or inside, it doesn't make any difference." Jiminies, but I had to laugh. That hit my funny-bone about all going on a hike to deliver a goose to somebody. Edgar Chase said his father was going to take it only he had to go on his route selling eggs. He said that the farmer bought it a couple of weeks ago and nobody took it to him all that time. Edgar said, "Wouldn't that maybe be a kind of a hike like yours?"

We all said, "Sure, come on, we'll go with you."

So then he took us out to the barnyard and chased the goose around. Gee it was fun watching him. Oh boy, but it was a great big goose. Sometimes it wouldn't run when he chased it and it fought back so he couldn't catch hold of it. All the while it kept quacking. We just sat there on the fence laughing.

All of a sudden Will Dawson said, "We'll call it a wild goose chase, hey?"

"That's a dandy inspiration," shouted Pee-wee.

So right now I tell you that's the name of this true story—Roy Blakeley's Wild Goose Chase. And believe me it was *wild* enough even for Pee-wee. And it was dangerous too, you'll see, because a lot of times we were face to face with death, we nearly died laughing.

After a little while Edgar Chase got the goose into a corner and it ran out between his legs, all the time quacking. Then it came running over toward us with its neck stuck out very brave like; oh boy, it was full of fight. Even we lifted up our legs kinder scared of it. Then it went chasing Edgar with its head stuck way up in the air—one sure thing, it wasn't afraid. We just sat there on the fence, laughing. Even Pee-wee will laugh, as long as you don't make fun of scouting.

Anyway, after a little while Edgar got it into a corner again and he made a grab for it and caught it. Some quacking! So then we all helped him put it in the box of his little cart. That was one of those two wheel carts that you push. I guess Edgar made it himself. The body of it was a grocery box and the wheels were made out of the round heads of kegs that nails come in,

that's what he said. It had a long handle, I guess it was a rake handle—some chariot!

So then we nailed a couple of strips of wood across the top of the box so the goose couldn't get out. But he could stand up nice and comfortable in the box and stick his neck out. That sure did look funny, his neck sticking up and poking around every which way while he kept quacking.

I said, "I've got a peach of an idea for a crazy hike; it's a couple of insulations or inspirations or whatever Pee-wee calls them. We'll go whatever way the goose points his neck—east, west, no matter where. It'll be kind of like a compass, only different. And we'll see what happens."

"Now you're starting that stuff!" Pee-wee shouted. "Even before you start I can tell you what will happen—we'll never get *anywhere*. If you're going to start that kind of an idiotical hike I'm not going to go."

"That's another good thing about it," I said.

All the while Edgar Chase was sitting on a feed barrel laughing and kicking his legs against the barrel. That's what he liked, seeing us have a mortal comeback with Pee-wee. That's when I started liking him, when I saw how he laughed.

Warde and Will just kind of winked at him as if pretty soon he'd see some fireworks.

I said, "It would be a true scout hike. Maybe I'll decide to call it the Rubberneck Hike. But no joking, I understand that a goose always sticks his head to the north because his bill is attracted by the North Pole. So we can always tell which way to go in case we don't want to go there. That shows how many things scouts know about nature." Warde said, "Sure, it's like a balloon. If it follows a flag pole it's sure to go up in the air. I read that in a book about unnatural history."

I said, "That would be a dandy hike for Pee-wee—a balloon hike—he's always going up in the air."

Oh bibbie, I had to laugh! Will said to Edgar, "If you want to join the boy scouts you have to know all the facts about nature, how a turtle always goes towards the water, and a squirrel always builds on the north side of a tree, and a cat always goes where there are cat-tails growing, and you find tigers where there are tiger lilies, and how when a woodchuck starts digging his hole he always starts at the bottom and digs up so he won't leave any earth outside and——"

"*Will you shut up!*" Pee-wee hollered. "Don't you pay any attention to him," he said to Edgar, "those ain't facts of nature at all! They've got nothing to do with natural history."

"Listen who's talking about history," I said. "Do you know what Pee-wee told a scout in Temple Camp? He told them that George Lincoln and

Abraham Washington were both born on holidays, I'll leave it to Warde. Talk about woods lore and facts of nature! A lot he knows about scouting!"

"*Now* you see what they are! *Now* you see what they are!" Pee-wee shouted at Edgar Chase. "Right away when they get a chance to go with you on a sensible hike to do an errand that even your *father* wants you to do—even your *father*—right away they start a lot of crazy stuff and call it scouting and if you do it you'll never get home—maybe even for *years* you won't get home—hiking the way a goose pokes his neck! *Geeeeee whiz!* And besides it ain't a fact of nature at all. It's a fact of crazy Silver Foxes that everybody in camp says are loony. So now you better do what your father wants you to do and don't let them make a fool out of you. *Geeeeee whiz*, that's what they call hikes!"

Edgar Chase just kept on laughing, and kicking his legs against the barrel. Gee, I guess he was enjoying it. Pee-wee thought we were on a mission to see a poor sick feller that broke his collar button and he was going to tell him all about scouting, and here he was up against the craziest hike we ever had!

I said, "*Goodnight*, how can I be serious going on a hike with a goose?"

"I kind of have a hunch it's going to be good," Warde said.

Will said, "I think from the look in that goose's face that things are going to happen."

I said, "We should worry, come on, let's start."

CHAPTER VIII

THE ESCAPE

Jiminies, was I to blame that we took a hike to see a feller that wrote me a letter and then got started on a hike with a goose quacking away in a push cart? You know me, I'd rather be serious and sober, but we had that hike wished onto us. Don't blame me; the next time any feller writes me a letter that he broke his neck or his collar bone and please come and see him—*never again*. Even if you break your neck you needn't write to me. Even if you get *killed* you needn't write to me. If you want me to have anything to do with a goose you'll have to cook him first. And you'll have to send me a sample before I'll come. Even you have to send some mashed potatoes too.

So then the five of us started down the road, with Edgar Chase pushing the cart and the goose sticking his long neck out and poking it every which way. Even Edgar's mother had to laugh when she saw us starting out. She went and got his sister and they were both laughing. One of them said, "I'm glad he has some friends to go with him."

Edgar said, "We'll follow the trail down through the woods and across the brook and that will be a short cut to Woodside Road."

So that's where our trouble started. Of course, very soon Pee-wee had to be the one to push the cart. So he was pushing it along the path through the woods and pretty soon we came to the brook and there was a couple of boards across it where the path went. Edgar said, "We save about a mile this way, it takes us right through to Farmer Quackenbush's road."

Boy, I guess that path wasn't used very often. Anyway, I guess the boards weren't. Because, *goodnight magnolia*, when Pee-wee was right in the middle one of them broke, I guess it was rotten. And down he went into the brook with the cart and all. We were lucky, we hadn't started over yet.

"Going down," I said, "next floor, ladies' dry goods, also wet goods. Basement next and last stop."

The brook was only about up to Pee-wee's waist and there he was spurting and sputtering and hanging onto the cart so it wouldn't float away. Oh boy, did that goose quack! I guess he thought it was the end of the world. The cart bobbed around sideways and then it went upside down and Pee-wee had to grab hold of it to keep it right side up. Don't ask me how it happened but he was kind of hugging it so nice and affectionate like to keep it rightside up when all of a sudden it rolled over and he made a grab for it. I guess he pulled off one of the sticks that were nailed across the box.

Anyway, the next we know, off went the goose sailing down the middle of the brook quacking away as loud as he could.

“Go over and get out on the other side,” I shouted to Pee-wee, “so we can head him off no matter which side he lands on.”

But I guess the kid was too excited to hear me; anyway, he came paddling out on our side, wagon and all. And we all stood there laughing; gee, you should have seen Edgar laugh.

I said, “This is going to turn out to be a good hike. Pee-wee seems to be slightly wet and I’m afraid the goose will catch cold. It’s good he knows how to swim, hey?”

“I wonder where he’s going,” Warde said.

“Follow your leader,” I shouted, and we all started down the shore of the brook following him.

“That’s the way it is on your hikes,” Edgar said, “things always happen. We’ll catch him somehow.”

“When we catch him we’ll fix an anchor to him,” Warde said.

But believe me, we didn’t catch him so soon. He went sailing merrily, merrily, down the brook, quacking all the time, with us running after him on the shore. Pretty soon the brook got good and wide, and it looked as if it was deep, too.

I said, “The plot grows thinner. Pee-wee should have got out on the other side when the getting out was good. Then we could have cut off his retreat on either shore.”

“I’d like to cut off his neck on either shore,” Edgar said.

“You mean Pee-wee?” Warde said.

“Was it my fault?” the kid shouted.

“Come on, don’t let him get too much ahead of us,” Will said. “Maybe he’ll get wrecked on a rock or something.”

“Maybe he means S.O.S., hey?” I said. “The next time you take a goose to a farmer you want to have sea scouts with you, Edgar. This may go on till he gets to the Atlantic Ocean if he doesn’t run out of gas.”

All the time we were picking our way along the shore and it wasn’t so easy because there were thick bushes there all full of burrs. If those burrs had been bullets I’d have been dead a couple of dozen times.

Warde said, “I think it’s a fact of scouting lore that a goose always lands on the other side of the stream.”

“Sure,” I said, “he’ll probably land when he gets to a place where the shore is very near to the water. You’ll see. Maybe he’s going all the way down to Catskill to land at the Boat Club. Well anyway, this is Pee-wee’s hike, he started it. That’s him all over, starting ridiculous, nonsensical, crazy,

insane, idiotical hikes, when all the while we want to do a serious errand for Edgar's father."

"Could I help it if the board broke?" Pee-wee shouted at me. "Gee whiz, what kind of a bridge do you call that? All rotten!"

Edgar said, "The bridge was all right till you walked on it."

"Do you call that an argument!" Pee-wee screamed.

"Edgar is right," I said. "A scout is supposed to know rotten wood when he sees it—it's a fact of nature, I'll leave it to Will."

"When crossing a bridge you should be careful not to step on it," Edgar said.

"Now I know you're just like the rest of them—*now I know!*" Pee-wee said. "Even you *want* to have catrophes, catas—I mean disasters. Even you *want* to have them."

"We eat 'em alive, don't we, Ed?" I said.

Pretty soon there were fields on the other side and there was a sign up that said,

NO LANDING HERE
TRESPASSING POSITIVELY FORBIDDEN

Right there the goose went swimming over to the shore, and out he waddled, all the while shaking himself so the water sprayed all over from him. I guess he felt pretty good after his swim. He should worry about us.

"Now he's going to get in trouble," Pee-wee said.

I said, "Maybe he doesn't read English."

"What are we going to do now?" Warde said. "The brook's good and wide here, and deep too."

"Sure, and wet," I said. "It's much wetter than up above."

"That's Farmer Flint's place, and he's an old bear," Edgar said. "He had a feller I know arrested for picking up an apple."

I said, "Well, as long as Pee-wee is wet already, I vote that he swim across and try to catch the goose. All in favor say Aye."

We all said "Aye"—all except Pee-wee.

CHAPTER IX

HOW TO BECOME A SILVER FOX

The goose stayed down around the shore, I think he was pulling up worms. Anyway, he didn't pay any attention to us. We just sat there in a row watching him. Pee-wee hung his suit up on a bush to dry in the sun.

I said, "The trouble with this brook is it has two sides to it."

"Sure, and the goose has one side all to himself," Warde said. "United we stand, divided we sprawl. If we could move the brook over to the other side of the goose it might be good."

"I never thought of that," I said.

Pee-wee said, "We better do *something* about it before he goes away and not sit here talking nonsense."

"This is just as good a place to talk nonsense as anywhere else," Edgar said.

"It's better," I told him. "Now you're talking like a Silver Fox."

"Even the goose has more sense than you have," the kid said.

Will said, "Don't bother us, we have to think what we're going to do; this is getting serious."

"Why should we think what we're going to do?" I said. "Look at the goose, he isn't thinking. Why should we do all the thinking? He's just as much a part of this hike as we are."

"That's a good argument," Warde said. "Do you know there's only one thing to prevent us from chasing him into the water? We're not over there—that's the only thing that prevents."

"*All right, all right,*" Pee-wee said, kind of disgusted like. "If you want to sit here and not do anything but talk like fools!"

"Come on," Edgar said, "let's go back upstream to where it's shallow and we can wade across."

So then we did that, we went back upstream till we came to a place where we could step across on rocks. We took the cart with us. Then we went downstream on the other side along the shore.

While we were going along Edgar said, "*Christopher*, I can't really believe I'm out hiking with you fellers, and you're real just like I am. In the crazy stories you told I didn't know if you were real or not—all the crazy things you did. I liked it when you went in a bee-line. Will you do that coming back?"

"If we can find one," I said.

“Find what?” the kid wanted to know.

“A bee-line,” I said. “How can we use one unless we find one? Don’t show your ignorance in front of a feller that maybe some day will join the scouts. The first bee-line we see we’ll follow it; won’t we Warde?”

“Do you call a bee-line a *trail*?” Pee-wee shouted.

“I’m not calling it names,” I said. “You can’t go on a bee-line unless you’ve got one to go on. I’ll leave it to Warde and Will.”

“It’s *invisible*,” Pee-wee shouted.

“I wish you were the same,” I said.

“*Gee whiz*,” he said, “if you pick out a thing you’re going to go straight to, and then you go straight to it in a bee-line like we did, that bee-line isn’t anything—it’s only a thing you go by.”

“How about the hole in a doughnut?” Will said. “Where is it when you finish the doughnut? If you don’t eat it, it must be there—you learn that in the fourth grade.”

“Those are Pee-wee’s favorite studies,” I said; “eating, eating, and eating.”

“You can’t see it but it’s there,” I said. “It’s like a bee-line hike only different. Suppose you take a bath; still you have one left, I don’t care how many you take. Didn’t anybody ever tell you that?”

“Did anybody ever tell you you’re crazy, idiotical lunatic?” the kid shouted.

“They don’t have to tell us, we admit it,” Will said. “We’re scouts and we don’t always have to be told things. A lot of fellers are going around behind our backs telling the truth about us—what do we care?”

“If you want to join the scouts you better join a patrol that’s got some sense,” Pee-wee said. “The Silver Fox Patrol is a joke patrol—*clowns*, that’s all they are.”

“Join the Chipskunk Patrol,” I said, “that’s like a bee-line, it’s invisible.”

“It’s extinct,” Warde said.

“It’s the best extinct patrol we’ve got,” Will said.

“That’s one thing about Pee-wee,” I said; “he never starts anything he can’t finish. He finished three patrols—I think he eats ’em.”

“Could I really be a scout?” Edgar wanted to know. “*Jumping bullfrogs*, I just can’t believe I’m really out with *real* fellers that I read about. Could I *really* join? Maybe could I be in those crazy stories?”

“You have to pass the insanity test,” I told him. “Did you ever sleep under a crazy quilt, and if so do you like nut cake? How often do you stalk birds and how many times did you go cuckoo?”

“You’ve got to know the Silver Fox emblem,” I said. “It’s a prune because it has a lot of wrinkles. Also do you eat between meals, and how

many meals can you eat between?”

Warde said, “Can you hike two miles at a time, or do you have to take them single?”

“We’ll give you an application blank,” I said. “You have to fill it out and send it to the patrol leader of the Silver Foxes (that’s me) in an envelope with the stamp inside, and if we don’t get it we let you know that you’re a member in good hiking—we don’t have any standing in our patrol.”

“You don’t—even you don’t have any standing in the troop,” Pee-wee hollered at us. “You ought to be named the Monkeys—even our scoutmaster told them that. There are five more of them and they’re just as bad. They got inspired by their crazy leader, that’s what Mr. Ellsworth says.”

“If he says anything about me that he’s sorry for, he’ll be mighty glad of it,” I said. “The Silver Foxes are known far and narrow. When we have a hike we tell the world. We’re so wild and primitive like scouts are supposed to be that my stories are printed on real leaves—that’s how much we love nature. If we hike at night they’re printed in black ink.”

“Only crazy fools buy them,” Pee-wee shouted; “all the nonsense you write down, *geeee whiz!* Do you know that good trees have to be cut down to get pulp to make paper to print all that stuff on. *Geeee whiz,* a lot you care about preserving a forest.”

“We like preserved fruit better, don’t we, Will?” I said.

Edgar was laughing all the time. He said, “Oh boy, I hope you’ll let me join.”

“Do you think they own the Boy Scouts of America?” Pee-wee shouted. “At Temple Camp nobody pays any attention to them. Even we got *Eagle Scouts* there. Even we got lots of Star Scouts too.”

“All you have to do is to go to the movies and know all about the movie stars to be a Star Scout,” Warde said. “What do we care about civilized theaters?”

“You want to look out how you believe them, you want to look out,” Pee-wee said. “They told a poor little tenderfoot that to get the Cooking badge you had to go on a Cook’s Tour. Don’t you let them make a fool out of you.”

All the time we were hiking down on the other side of the brook, back to where the goose was. When we got almost there we saw a man with a big straw hat trying to shoo the geese into the water. Oh boy, it was funny to see it because you can’t chase a goose, anyway not a big gander like that one. He was the biggest one I ever saw outside of a museum and I never saw one in a museum at all. Anyway, you can’t chase one because a gander can never decide if he wants to run or if he wants to fight you. So he does both, one after the other at the same time. He wasn’t afraid, that gander, I’ll say that

for him. A lot he cared about trespassing. He would stick his neck way up and make a grand rush.

Anyway, just before we got there I guess he got tired of fighting and quacking, for off he went waddling down into the water. I guess he thought he won. He swam nice and easy over to the other side and waddled out, giving himself a good shake—you'd think it was a shower. "*Good night*," I said, "we changed sides. What is this, a wild goose chase or a football game?"

"Didn't I start a good crazy hike?" Edgar said.

I said, "Believe me, you don't need any application blank, you're a Silver Fox already, even if we have to shoot one of the other members. I think this hike is going to be good."

"You ought to have the goose for a member," Pee-wee said.

CHAPTER X

WE SOUND BETTER “STILL”

I said, “Hey mister, that’s our goose and we came after him.”

He said, “Well you got here too late. I don’t care whose he is, he ain’t goin’ ter root around on my property. D’yer see that sign there? Now what do you youngsters want on other people’s land?”

“Now I bet we’re going to be arrested,” Pee-wee whispered, very scared like.

Warde said, “Hey mister, do you know any way we could get on the same side of the brook with that goose? If we go over there he’ll come over here. We’d like to get in touch with him. Maybe it might go on like this for years.”

The man said, “Well, if I’d o’ knowed yer was comin’ I’d o’ kept him here. He’s a pesky, ugly devil he is—that one. Where you fetchin’ ’im to, Quackenbush’s farm?”

Warde said, “That’s what we think; we don’t know what *he* thinks.”

The man said, “Well I reckon he won’t go far from the water.”

“He doesn’t have to,” I said. “Every time we go across we have to make a detour and he takes a short cut.”

He said, “Well, tain’t none o’ my concern longs he don’t come over here.”

So then he went away and we started up the stream again and came down on the other side, and went along very quietly on tip-toe to where the goose was. But he heard us and turned around about three times and started after us with his head stuck up in the air. Then he turned around and went into the water. *Good night!*

We all flopped down on the shore as if we were dead. Then we sat in a row again watching the goose paddling around in the water.

Warde said, “This is getting serious.”

“Talk about the Thirty Year War!” Will said.

Edgar said, “I think our skeletons will be found here about fifty years from now. I hope we can catch him before we starve so as we can cook him. Isn’t this a good kind of crazy hike, and I’m not even a scout at all.”

“Sure,” I said, “the brook is the only thing that seems to be getting anywhere. Maybe in a few years it will dry up and then we can catch him.”

“Now he’s going up on shore for a light lunch; he’s got an appetite like Pee-wee,” Will said.

“Shall we hike upstream and go over there again?” I asked them.

“What’s the use?” Warde said.

“There’s only one thing to do,” I said, “and that is to make up some songs while we’re sitting here.”

“Now you’re going to see how crazy they are,” Pee-wee told Edgar. “Now you’re going to see why they never get anywhere.”

“Maybe you won’t like it,” I said to Edgar; “but when we finish you’ll like it. Everybody likes it when we get finished, I’ll leave it to Pee-wee.”

“One, two, three,” Will said.

So then we started one of our Silver Fox songs, Station N.U.T. Pee-wee Harris announcing.

“It isn’t any use
To try to catch a goose.

“It’s getting very late
And we’ll have to sit and wait.

“We will not start a fuss
He’ll have to come back to us.

“We’ll sit so nice and kind
And perhaps he’ll change his mind.”

“How do you like it?” I asked Edgar. He was laughing so hard he couldn’t answer me.

Will said, “Come on, let’s sing him our regular patrol song. One, two, three—

“Oh how do you like our crazy hikes
Our crazy hikes
Our crazy hikes?
We roam the country o’er.

“Oh how do you like our crazy hikes
Our crazy hikes
Our crazy hikes?
We’ll never get home any more.

“We went on a hike in the wood,
We went on a hike in the wood,
But we couldn’t go round
Without touching the ground,
And I bet you that nobody could.

“We went on a hike by the shore,
We went on a hike by the shore,
But the shore and the sea
Were as close as could be,
And we’ll never go there any more.”

“Do you want to hear some more?” I said. “That’s the Silver Fox Hike Song, it has four million verses or less. Tune in on the Silver Fox hour every Friday and a week from last Tuesday.”

“*Now* do you want to join them?” Pee-wee said. “When all the while you might be pathfinding, and stalking and making signal fires and studying birds and animals and learning about roots and herbs? *Now* do you want to join them? Do you call that scouting?”

I started up—

“We went on a hike up a hill,
We went on a hike up a hill,
But we never could slide,
Down the opposite side,
And I don’t think that anyone will.”

“*Will you shut up!*” the kid screamed. “Geeeee whiz,” he said to Edgar, “You know how railroad tracks look as if they go to a point when you look way up the track? Even they were so crazy that they took a hike to go where that point was.”

I said, “We were doing our duty as scouts; we wanted to prevent a railroad accident. We’ve got a song about that hike too—

“We went on a hike up the track,
We went on a hike up the track,
To look for the point
Where the tracks made a point
And, believe me, we never got back.”

“Go on, sing some more,” Edgar said. So then we all started together—

“We hiked round the lake in the Park,
We hiked round the lake in the Park,
We went all around
And around and around,
And didn’t get home until dark.”

All of a sudden Will started shouting, “Look, here come a couple of fellers down across the fields. Maybe now we can cut off the goose’s line of communications. All we need is somebody on both sides at the same time.”

“If we had somebody on one side at both times it would be just as good,” I said. “We could even get along if we only had one side like the rivers in China, they only have a left shore, it’s in my Geography.”

“Sure all the hills are one way hills too,” Warde said; “they go up but they can’t come down, they only have one side to them.”

“Let’s greet them with a song,” I said.

“We went on a hike up the road
We rode on the road where it snowed”

“*Will you shut up with your songs!*” Pee-wee shouted, “so we can hear what those fellers are saying.”

CHAPTER XI THREE RECRUITS

There were two of those fellers and they came running down. I said, "Come ahead, let's sing a couple of songs so they'll know we're crazy."

"They'll find it out soon enough," Warde said.

So then we started up again, all sitting in a row on the shore.

"We went for a hike in the rain,
We went for a hike in the rain;
We started to hop
And we all went kerflop
And we'll never go that way again."

"Can't you see they're regular scouts?" Pee-wee shouted at us. "Will you keep still!"

When they came near, Warde shouted across to them, "Hey scouts, will you please catch that goose and keep him over there till we come over."

"You better look out, you're trespassing," Pee-wee shouted.

One of them said, "No we're not because we belong here; we live up at the house."

I said, "Go ahead, catch him, and then we'll come over. Scouts are supposed to do good turns."

We sat there watching while those two fellers tried to catch the goose. They were pretty lively, those fellers. After a little while one of them headed him off and the other made a grab for him and they both kept hold of him. Oh boy, did that goose quack!

Edgar shouted, "Hang on to him and we'll be over there."

Absolutely, positively this is the last time you have to read about us going back to the other side. When we went over, we stayed over, and now I'm sorry we did. We went up to the place where the rocks were and picked our way across and down again on Mr. Flint's land.

"Now I bet we're going to get in trouble," Pee-wee said; "it says no trespassing on that sign."

"We're not trespassing on the sign," Edgar told him.

"You don't need to worry about trespassing," one of those strange fellers said, "because we live up at the house and we've got a right to have company if we want to. You should worry about trespassing. That man is our grandfather and all he does is chase people and dogs and chickens away;

that's his favorite outdoor sport. Our father's name is Walker and he owns this place too."

It was awful funny, the two of them holding the goose and trying to talk to us at the same time.

"Don't let go of him whatever you do," I said.

"We got him," they said. All the while they kept laughing; I guess they saw the fun of it. Because the goose kept wriggling and quacking and jabbing them with his bill.

Warde said, "Don't mind him, he hasn't got any manners."

Thank goodness, pretty soon we had him in the cart again, sticking his big long neck up between the crosspieces and poking it all around.

Warde said, "Now that we've all got together at last, we might as well start the parade. Is it all right to go up across your land? We're going to deliver this goose to a farmer."

"Sure, it is," they said, "you can go right up past the house to the road. What farm are you going to?"

Edgar told them we were going to Quackenbush's farm in Dawdleboro. Right away they wanted to go with us. Gee they were some peppy pair, those fellers. They said they were just hanging around waiting for a carrier pigeon to come back. They said they guessed he had a flat tire or something. One of them was named Bud and the other one Jay. They said they saw us from up at the house.

"We'd like to go with you if you don't mind," one of them said.

"Sure, come ahead," I told them; "the more the merrier. This is getting to be a parade."

"Were you really, truly waiting for a pigeon?" Pee-wee asked them. "Where's he coming from?"

"He's coming from Poughkeepsie if he ever gets here," one of them said.

"Gee, I know all about carrier pigeons," Pee-wee said. "I read all about them in a scout book."

"Well I'd like to know something about this one," Bud said. "A feller in Poughkeepsie that we know was up here visiting us, and he took him back home with him to set him free. That was about a week ago and we haven't seen him yet. I guess he's coming by way of Europe."

"Rinkey ought to be here soon; he's supposed to be hiking back," Jay said.

"Who's Rinkey?" I asked him.

They told us that Rinkey was the feller that took the pigeon back to Poughkeepsie. They said he was going to hike back to their house again. Jay said, "I wish he was here now; you can have lots of fun with that feller."

Before we all started off for Dawdleboro Bud and Jay showed us their animals, gee they had a regular menagerie. They had about a dozen pigeons and they said two of them were carriers. They had a raccoon, too, in a cage. Besides, they had a couple of snapping turtles.

While we were all hiking along the road Will Dawson said to Pee-wee, “Hey kid, why don’t you name your next patrol the Carrier Pigeons, because the fellers you get are always going away and not coming back?”

“That one will be back yet—you see,” Bud said.

“Sometimes they stay away for days and days and still get back,” his brother said. “Maybe Rinkey didn’t set him free till about when he was going to start back himself. Anyway, we should worry, we’re on a hike now.”

Edgar Chase said, “Well, one thing sure anyway, if there’s any new patrol starting, I’m in it. You can bet I’m going to join the scouts—you can’t get rid of me now.”

I said, “Here’s your chance, Pee-wee; you’ve got Edgar and Bud and Jay and that other feller Rinkey Dink or whatever his name is. There’s five of you, all you need is three more. And you get the Bronx Park Zoo thrown in.”

“Sure then he can give a big show,” Warde said.

“That’s Pee-wee’s middle name, giving shows,” I told them; “he gives them about twice a minute, with extra matinees on Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, and Saturday. While *we’re* out doing good turns to people and finding lost children, and preventing fires, and saving lives and everything, Pee-wee is giving shows. I bet you in a week from now it’ll cost you ten cents to see that raccoon. He’ll be sending his homework in by carrier pigeons.”

“*That shows, that shows*—Pee-wee shouted.

“That’s what I’m talking about—shows,” I said.

“That shows the kind of things you want fellers to believe,” he said. “Even you never do any big things at all—like real scouting.”

“Didn’t we go hunting for the lost hour in daylight saving?” I said. “I’ll leave it to Warde if we didn’t. That was *some* hike. Didn’t we kill a lot of mad dogs to help the police?”

“Those were hot dogs,” Will said.

“What’s the difference?” I said to him; “it was civic helpings.”

“Now you see the way they talk,” Pee-wee shouted, to those new fellers. “A lot they don’t know about what scouts are supposed to do. Even I helped to catch a murderer, I did—a real murderer——”

“He was guaranteed,” I said. “He was one of the best murderers ever caught. Pee-wee chopped a tree down so it fell on purpose accidentally

across the road and the murderer couldn't get by in his car. It was a dandy mistake. He even had the trees arrested for throwing leaves in the street."

"Who cleaned up Barrel Alley?" he screamed at me.

"Who cleaned up the lunch at the B. L. picnic?" I shot back at him. "We did just as much cleaning up as you did—maybe even less."

"Even I put out a brush fire and prevented a house from burning down," the kid shouted. "Even I helped to catch *thieves*. Even I ran a mile and told the fire department there was a fire in a house——"

"Only it turned out to be the reflection of the setting sun," Warde said.

"*Could I help that!*" the kid hollered.

"It was the sun that was to blame," Will said.

"*Geeeeeee whiz!*" Pee-wee shouted, good and disgusted like, "all the time I'm doing real things like helping the authorities about criminals and fires and things—and even kidnapped children——"

"He eats 'em alive," I said.

"When a fire sees him it goes out," Warde said.

"Even I pulled a live wire away from across the sidewalk with an old tire," the kid said. "Even you couldn't *count* how many lives maybe I saved."

"It was something less than a million," I said.

"All the time while you're having crazy, nonsensical hikes," he kept up. "Gee whiz, if you want to know what you got to do to be real scouts you better ask me. You got to do services for the community. Even crimes you have to fathom."

"Explain all that," I said.

"Even the *police* thanked me, they did," he said.

"Why he thinks nothing of stopping a couple of wars," Will said.

"I think nothing of stopping a couple of insane dunces who even prevent fellers from knowing about scouting," he shouted. "And maybe now anyway I'm going to start a new patrol——"

"Sure, you haven't started one for a couple of minutes," I said.

"*Will you shut up for a couple of minutes!*" he yelled at me.

Oh boy, were those three new fellers laughing!

"So will you join a patrol if I start one?" the kid said.

"Sure, we'd like to," Bud Walker said. "Only how can we when we live all in different places?"

"That's easy," I said, "you can have what we call a scatter patrol——"

"Will you shut up!" the kid yelled. "Don't you believe him."

Warde said, "I tell you what you do, kid. You do something good and big; catch a couple of murderers or something, or solve a few mysteries for the community. That will make so much of a hit that Bud and Jay's folks,

and Edgar's folks, will send them to Temple Camp, and you can start a new patrol there. Just save a couple of lives or so—maybe three or four—what's the difference."

"*Oh boy*, I'm not kicking the way it is now," Edgar Chase said. "I'm just glad to be out on a hike with you, listening to your kidding. I sure never thought I'd ever really know you."

"Well you can bet *we'd* like to join up," Jay Walker said. "There's not so much pep to homing pigeons."

"Stick to us and you'll *never* get home," I said.

CHAPTER XII

THE FATE OF TWO GANDERS

They were three nice fellers, I'll say that. All the time we were hiking Pee-wee was telling them about scouting—all the big things he did. He was pushing the cart and talking all the time. He talks so much he can say two or three words at a time. He doesn't bother about punctuation marks, I guess he eats them, anyway they don't come out.

After a while we came to a sign and it said,

YOU ARE NOW IN DAWDLEBORO
DRIVE SLOW

I guess Hervey Willets must have been through there sometime because the two letters ER were added to the word *slow*. That's his middle name, changing signs and doing all things like that.

I said, "Look, it says Drive Slower. Boy, but this must be a slow place." I took the cart from Pee-wee and started pushing it as slow as I could possibly go, about an inch a year. They all got behind me in a row like a parade.

The kid started shouting, "Will you stop your nonsense and go ahead! Gee whiz, we'll never get home."

I said, "We're boy sprouts and we have to obey the law. Do you see what it says on the sign? No matter how slow you're going, you have to go even slower. You have to go even slower than slowest. Even if we're going so slow that we've stopped when we see the sign, even we have to go slower than that. Maybe we might even have to back up. The Silver Foxes always obey the law."

"Do you think I'm going to go along like this?" Pee-wee said, good and mad. "I'm hungry, now, I am."

"Tell us something we don't know," I said. "If I saw you when you were not hungry it would be somebody else. If you didn't always bring your appetite you wouldn't have so much to carry. Get in line."

"Even you want strange fellers to see how crazy you are," he grouched. "I thought we were going to start a bee-line hike back. Gee whiz, the sun will be going down."

"Don't blame us, blame the sun," Warde said. "Let it go where it wants to, what do we care, we're on a wild goose hike."

After we got him all worked up I started walking faster, and pretty soon we came to a little house where there was an old man sitting on the step.

I said, "Hey mister, can we get a drink of water at the well?"

He said, "I reckon yer kin. Where yer fetchin' that gander, down ter Quackenbush's?"

When we came back to the cart, there he was, looking at the goose. He said, "Golly, he's a whopper, ain't he!"

Edgar said, "He took two prizes already in the County Fair."

"He took a walk too," I said, "and a swim."

"Quackenbush goin' ter exhibit him?" he wanted to know. "That thar feller ought ter win first blue ribbon. My oh me, but he's a fine specimen. I used ter raise them critters, and I know. I don't believe I ever seed a bigger one. Yer know whenever I look at one o' them pesky things I thinks about the time—let's see, that were nigh on eight or nine year back—when I lost two on 'em. And I reckon you'd never guess how. Lookin' around yer here in this sleepy old village, I bet you'd never guess how. They was et up by a go-riller."

"You mean to tell me they have gorillas here?" Pee-wee shouted.

Will said, "I'm sorry we didn't bring our bean shooters."

"What do you mean, a gorilla?" Bud Walker piped up.

"Yes siree, it were just nothin' but a go-riller."

"*A live one?*" Pee-wee shouted.

"No, it was a dead one," I said.

"I never heard of gorillas in Dawdleboro," Edgar said.

The old man said, "Well, now you heerd o' one. An I never looks at a goose but I thinks o' that night when I goes out ter that thar kitchen door with my lantern ter see what all the fuss was about in the hen house—cacklin' and flutterin' and flappin' like there was one of them earthquakes. An' all of a sudden like, out comes that big ugly critter swingin' a goose in his arm—a prime big gander, big as this here one. I drops that thar lantern like as it were a pisen snake, I did. An' inter the house I goes pell-mell tellin' my ole woman what I see—some kind of a wild man, I says. Well, she starts laughin' jes like you youngsters are laughin' now, and she says, 'Ezry, you're seein' things.' Me, I wouldn't go near that hen house, fearin' he'd come back."

"I bet you were dreaming," Pee-wee said.

"I bet it was Corway's nigger," Edgar said.

The old man said, "No, t'weren't Corway's nigger, though I 'low he's scary enough ter look at. I goes up the road a piece that night an' tells Berry Forbes—jest up thar ter that white house, you kin see it in among the trees. He on'y laughs an' says I must of been drinkin'."

"Get out, they don't have gorillas around here," Jay Walker started laughing.

“Even they don’t have regular monkeys,” Pee-wee said.

The old man started kind of chuckling and he says, “You scout youngsters ain’t so smart—no more’n I wuz. Next mornin’, after every Tom, Dick and Harry roun’ here has his say out as how I must o’ been dreamin’, we hears that Costello’s Circus down here ter Turners Junction Centre.”

“*Now I know, now I know!*” Pee-wee started shouting. “It escaped from the circus, that gorilla.”

“Isn’t it wonderful how smart he is?” I said. “He did it by deduction, like a scout. As soon as he saw that well he knew there was water here.”

“*Jiminies*, but you had some scare all right,” Bud Walker said.

“*I’ll say*, and did they catch him?” his brother asked.

The old man was kind of laughing at us, the way we didn’t believe him at the beginning. He said, “Well, we heerd around here how a game warden shot at ’im down South Woods over the Massachusetts line. Some says it was on’y a bear he shot, but I reckon he’d know the difference ’tween a bear ’n one o’ them go-rillas. I seed a paper had it all writ up. Anyways, I never sees a goose but I thinks o’ that good skeer I had ’n’ I allus gits the joke on them ez I tell it to. Him’s a pretty prime gander yer got. Golly, but he’s a *whopper*. Reckon Ezry’s countin’ on exhibitin’ him ter the fair, huh?”

CHAPTER XIII PEE-WEE'S HOBBY

I said to those Walker fellers, "It's too bad you couldn't have that gorilla for your managerie."

"Some scare all right," Warde said.

"Come on," I said, "let's beat it, it's getting late. Then we can have a bee-line hike back."

"And it's not going to be a crazy one either," Pee-wee said; "trying to hike through the middle of houses and all that, even bunking into people to go in a bee-line, even waiting for a snail to get out of the way like you did before, even waiting for a freight car to move—about two hours we waited. It's going to be across country where we have to surmount real obstacles, like going straight over hills and everything."

"If a candy store is in our path we have to go into it," I said; "that's a regular bee-line hike. If a hot dog stand is in our path we have to eat hot dogs till there aren't any more and the man moves away. If we make a solemn vow we have to keep it like we did before. Even if we bunk into a school we have to go into it much as we solemnly regret our duty."

"You got those words out of a book, and you think you're smart showing off," Pee-wee said. "Anyway, I'm going to be the boss of this bee-line hike and you're not going to turn it into a lot of idiotical nonsense in front of new fellers because I'm going to start a new patrol and they're going to be in it. Now I decided that's what I'm going to do. Gee whiz, I like a bee-line hike all right if you have some sense about it."

"You're more to be pitied than blamed," I said to the three new fellers.

"Would we be in your troop?" Edgar asked me.

"Sure you would," I said. "You can bring all your animals, too, and start a circus, the more the merrier. You'll have some boss, believe me. I'd rather have Mussolini for a patrol leader than Pee-wee. All the time you have to be picking up papers in streets and returning lost dogs and finding kidnapped children and finding clues about burglars and trailing robbers and murderers and other forms of wild life. When Pee-wee eats a banana he eats the skin, too, so nobody will slip on it, he's such a good scout. You fellers join his patrol and you'll be stopping floods and everything—even once he prevented the lightning from striking a poor old lady, I'll leave it to Warde and Will if he didn't."

“Sure, he stops a couple of earthquakes a day,” Will said. “Do you remember when he saved his sister from being drowned in a canoe by losing the key to the locker so she couldn’t get the canoe out? *There* was scout heroism!”

“Yes, but look at the people he nearly kills—when they almost die laughing at him,” I said.

“Are you going to pay any attention to them?” Pee-wee asked the three fellers. “Or are you going to be real scouts like you’re supposed to be, like it says in the handbook? You got to say what you’re going to do.”

“Answer yes you are not,” Warde said.

“Anyway *I* will,” Edgar said.

I said, “That’s a noble sacrifice, you’re a true boy sprout.”

“But anyway, gee, I like the Silver Foxes,” he said.

“Same here,” said the other two of them. “It’ll be kind of like being in your patrol, won’t it?”

“Sure,” I told them. “United we stand, divided we sprawl.”

“He said that eighty billion times,” Pee-wee told them; “and it hasn’t got any meaning. Even our scoutmaster says the Silver Foxes are like the froth on rootbeer.”

“Good night,” I said, “then you ought to like us. Pee-wee’s patrols are like pie, they don’t last very long. Sometimes they end before they start and you don’t know whether you’re leaving or joining. When you go in you meet yourself coming out.”

“You’ll always be welcome when the Silver Foxes are going on a hike,” Warde told them. “The rest of them are not as bad as we are, they’re a good deal worse.”

“Our hikes are an institution,” I said.

“So is an insane asylum an institution,” shouted Pee-wee.

“No sooner said than stung,” I said. “Did we tell you fellers about when we trailed a railroad train in the forest?”

So then we started up:

“We went for a hike on the pike,
We went for a hike on the pike;
We followed the track
And we never got back
That’s the kind of a hike that we like.”

“Yes and you got a good calling down when you got back to camp too,” Pee-wee said, “for being late and walking on the rails.”

“We were tracking some wild cows,” I said. “The freight train was full of cows, we saw them. Do you mean to tell me that scouts aren’t supposed to track animals? That shows how much you know about real scouting. We were following a signal fire and it turned out to be the smoke from the engine. Could we help where it went? A lot you know about scout lore.”

And anyway now I’m going to end this chapter because I have to go to supper and we’re going to have apple dumplings. And spinach, too, I hate that stuff. And you needn’t write to me and say you’d like to go on one of those railroad hikes because we never go on the same kind of a hike twice. Sometimes we go on one kind of a hike going, and another kind of a one coming back. Sometimes we start in the middle and go both ways. I bet you’ll say that right in this story we’re taking a bee-line hike when we took the same kind of a one before, but you just wait and see.

So long, I’ll see you at Quackenbush’s farm. And wait till you see what happens.

CHAPTER XIV

MAPS OR BIRDSEYE VIEWS

Mmm, *yum yum*, I had two apple dumplings for supper, so now I'm going to write some more. Maybe you're wondering where I write out all our crazy adventures. It's up in my room. I got a peach of a room, and it's got a window seat in the bay window, and that's where I sit. I sit with my legs up like a kind of a desk, and that's how I write.

Do you know how I can tell when I get to the end of a chapter? Maybe it's when dinner is ready. Sometimes maybe it might be because my fountain pen is empty, anyway it's not much good because I used some Indian ink that Pee-wee Harris made and ever since then it doesn't write so good. No wonder the Indians cut their writing on stones if they had to use that kind of ink. I think he crunches up violets, anyway it looks like a strawberry soda, all foamy like, that's what makes my stories so frothy, I should worry.

When I go to scout meeting on Friday night I take all the stuff I wrote and Mr. Ellsworth sticks in commas and things and fixes it up. But he doesn't fix it up much because he wants it to be real, like me. So then he sends it away and I don't know where he sends it to and I don't care. That picture of me on the cover was painted by an artist and I stayed home from school three afternoons while he did it and I'm sorry it didn't take him six years. And if any scout wants my fountain pen for a souvenir I'll swap it for a jack-knife.

And any time if I stop in the middle of a story you'll know it's because I haven't got any more paper because now my sister keeps her desk locked, I guess she wants all her paper to write letters to Corry Bender, he's in Harvard. And even she writes crazier stuff than I do, but anyway he's a nice feller, he gave me a compass only I don't use it because we should worry where we go, and if so, why.

So now you know how everything in my crazy hike stories is real, even the food and everything, and you can laugh if you want to, I don't care, we have a lot of fun just the same. You get more eats in my stories than in any others, cones and hot dogs and waffles and sandwiches and gumdrops and peanuts and everything—that shows what a fine author I am. But anyway you'll never study me in school because I won't be there, that's one good thing. So now you know all about me and I hope you're satisfied and the reason Pee-wee is in my stories is because I can't keep him out, and you

needn't write and ask for his address because he's all different places at the same time—if he had an address he'd eat it.

So now I'm going to start again where we got to Quackenbush's farm. I said, "Hey Mister Quackenbush, will you please kindly take your goose and we're delighted that we're so sorry we have to be glad that we're overjoyed to part with him, because this hike is going to be a story and we don't want him in it any more—let him start a troop of his own."

He was an awful nice man and so was his wife, I mean she was a nice woman. After he gave Edgar the money he asked him how his shoulder was and Edgar told him it was all right but his funny-bone was working overtime. Mrs. Quackenbush said that she didn't have dinner yet and she liked boys.

"Do you think maybe she's going to eat us?" I said to Pee-wee.

He said, "Will you have some sense while she's talking about food."

So then she said we should sit down and have some eats before we went back, we had such a lot of trouble with the goose. We had dandy eats, chicken pie and rice pudding—mm, oh boy!

Edgar said, "Hey Mr. Quackenbush, we're going to take a bee-line hike back. Do you know if we could make it in a straight line?"

"We have to have some obstacles," Pee-wee said.

I said to him, "Keep still, can't you see there aren't any of those on the table?" I said. "You must excuse our little scout comrade, he's very fond of obstacles, he eats them raw."

Mr. Quackenbush said, "What do you want them for?"

"We have to surmount them," Pee-wee said.

I said, "If you haven't got any obstacles, a few resources would do just as well."

Pee-wee said, "I mean real obstacles of nature."

"We don't use imitations," Warde said.

Mr. Quackenbush said, "Well naow that's what we uster call a pint-ter-pint hike when I wuz a youngster, 'n' if you boys want ter get back across country ter the Chase place yer got a good chore ahead of yer. Let's see, yer got—yer mean ter go dead straight?"

"That's what," we told him.

Bud Walker said, "Let's just go as far as our home and then my father will take you to Temple Camp in our car. And he'll take Edgar home too. That'll be bee-line enough for to-day, it's getting late."

All of a sudden Pee-wee started shouting, "I got a dandy idea! Do you know what I'm going to do? Do you see that hill across the road—where the church is? I'm going up on that to get a good look-off, I bet I can see all the country from here to Claverack. I bet maybe I can even see Bud and Jay's

house, I bet I can. Even I might go up in that church steeple, hey? Then I sure positively could. Geeee whiz, this bee-line hike will be easy!”

Mr. Quackenbush said, kind of laughing, he said, “T’won’t be so easy as it looks. Yer got Wild Cat Gulch ter cross, and yer got—let’s see—yes yer got Deathhead Marsh. You figger on a straight course from that old church even ter the Walker homestead, and them’s the obstacles yer got, if yer so sot on obstacles.”

Jiminies, I wasn’t scared on account of what he said, because that’s just the fun of a bee-line hike. And if the other fellers wanted to have a real one, I was sure willing. Sometimes things are worse when you get to them. And one thing, you can’t scare me with a map. Or with a birdseye pike either.

“What do you think about it?” Warde asked me.

“Go as far as you like,” I said; “I don’t care.”

“It’s getting late,” Will said.

“*Now* you see, *now* you see!” the kid started shouting. “Now you see what Silver Foxes are, how they’re false alarms. All the time they go on crazy, nonsensical hikes and now when I want to show three new fellers a real bee-line hike like scouts are *supposed* to have, right away they *hedge*! Anyway we’re going to do it, I don’t care what, we’re going to do it.”

That’s him all over, conquering nature. All he needs is two or three fellers that are not scouts and he’ll show them how to get lost and get starved and get wet, and then he’ll start rescue fires and smudge signals and he kids himself that he’s Buffalo Bill or somebody. Follow him and you’ll be toadstools in the wild forest.

I said, “If you’ll wait a few minutes till we get through eating we’ll all go up on the hill and take a hike. Do you think we’re scared of a couple of swamps? Many’s the mud puddle we hopped over, hey Warde? I wouldn’t take a dare from the Rocky Mountains.”

“You’ll start a lot of crazy nonsense, I know you,” he shouted.

“Sure, and we’ll finish our supper too,” I said. “If a Silver Fox starts to do a thing he finishes it.”

I guess he was scared that he wouldn’t be boss if he didn’t start things himself, right away. And besides he was going to show Bud and Jay and Edgar some real scouting. Already he was coming down with the symptoms of a new patrol. You can never stop that kid when he gets started. Me, I’m satisfied to hop on one leg around the block—you know me. But he’s got to defy the Canadian North Woods in front of new fellers. Up he jumped and off he started running up the hill that started from the other side of the road.

He was all through with nonsensical nonsense, I’ll say. I guess he was afraid if we went with him we’d kid him about his wild, primitive plans. When he gets hold of new fellers he’s like a dog with a bone.

I said, "Now we'll be eating soup made with stink weeds before we get home."

"Sure, we'll be lucky if we don't have to wait for some chipmunk or Junebug or angleworm to show us which way is north," Will said.

"We'll be trying to get a signal fire started with lightning bugs, you see," Warde said.

"I'm game," I told them; "as long as I don't have to eat pioneer's stew made with locusts." Mrs. Quackenbush said to her husband, "You don't suppose he'll try to go up the old steeple, do you? I'm 'fraid the ladder's all rotten, 'taint been used in years. It's a musty, spooky place, and what's more, I don't b'lieve it's safe. Joe Hassel says 'taint. You don't reckon he'll go up there, do you?"

"Guess he ain't heavy enough to bust it," Mr. Quackenbush said, kind of chuckling.

"Leave it to him," Warde said.

Gee, I had to laugh, looking out through the window to see the kid hiking up that hill all alone. He looked very brave and independent like. He looked as if he was through with us on account of how joyous and carefree we are, merrily what care we?

"Now there are going to be doings," Will said. "We're going to get some real Daniel Boone stuff—something big."

"Sure, no more nonsense," I said. "Now you fellers are going to see boy scouts fighting the wilderness. Do you like pudding made with burrs and thistles? Now you're going to see a whole gang of scout resources."

All the while the kid went trudging up the hill and when he got up there he looked about as big as a kewpie doll. He showed up good and clear because the sun was beginning to get down low, almost to the top of the hill, and it made the old church up there look good and clear, too. It sort of looked all bright. Maybe the old church was what made Pee-wee look so little. Even Edgar and Bud and Jay were laughing, he looked so funny like, up there.

Warde said, "It's funny the sun doesn't make the windows in that church shine like if they were lighted. Don't you know how windows far off look when the sun shines on them while it's setting?"

"There ain't no winders into it," Mr. Quackenbush said, "hain't been fer years. They got a new meeting house down t'other side now. That there old wreck ain't nuthin' but a landmark. Me 'n' mom was married into it, wasn't we mom? Well, the village is all down t'other side of the hill now. Come 'long, you boys, inter the settin' room 'n' I'll see if I kin scare yer up one of them survey maps showin' the cross country way ter Claverack. Maps is a sight better'n birdseye views, I reckon."

CHAPTER XV

WHERE IS PEE-WEE?

So then he found us a map, but *oh boy*, we never used it. Because now the plot's going to get thicker. With Pee-wee you never know what's going to happen. The six of us started up the hill, and believe me, we had some peachy view up there. We saw a steeple way way off, and Edgar said it was the church of Claverack. Gee, that would have been a dandy mark to follow. That time of day every thing looks good and clear. We could see the marsh too, that was on the map, all kind of gray. I guess it had mist over it, hey?

But we didn't see Pee-wee anywhere. We shouted to him but we didn't get any answer. It was good and breezy up there. All of a sudden we heard a door or a shutter or something banging and I thought it might be him inside somewhere. We kept shouting but he didn't answer.

I said, "That's blamed funny. Do you think he's up in the steeple?"

"Even so he could hear us," Warde said. The others all said sure he could.

I said, "Come on, let's call again good and loud." So then we all shouted together and there was a kind of voice answered.

"Listen, there he is," Bud said.

I said, "Let's try again."

"It's nothing but an echo," Edgar said. "*Boy*, but this is some spooky old ruin."

Believe me, he was right. Gee, I've been in spooky places, even up at Bear Mountain I hiked to a haunted house. But, *oh boy*, that old church was spooky. Spooks camped there, that's what I think. All the old shutters were banging in the breeze, creepy like.

I said, "Come on, let's go up the steeple and find out what's the matter. It's blamed funny where he is."

IMAGE OMITTED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

"COME ON, LET'S GO UP THE STEEPLE AND FIND OUT WHAT'S THE MATTER."

Honest, I was good and scared. Because if he was up there he must have heard us. We get a good laugh out of Pee-Wee when he's doing the big scout stuff, but, *boy oh boy*, not when it gets too serious.

"He's probably up there making a diagram," Warde said.

"Maybe he's stalking a bat up there," said Will.

Just the same, I don't know, I felt kind of funny about it. We went in at an old door that was all hanging on one hinge and it was all full of spiders in there. Even when we kicked the carpet it all fell apart. It was like shredded wheat, that's what Bud Walker said. Gee, you couldn't tell what color it used to be even. There was a rope hanging down and it was all rotten, you could break it like a stick. Some kind of a thing went scooting away, I don't know what it was.

"How are we going to go up?" Edgar wanted to know. "Look, the ladder's broken."

"*Jiminies*," I said.

Warde said, "If we can't get up, he didn't, that's sure."

We could look way, way up the steeple. It smelled all kinds of damp in there. Kind of like stale wood, too. The ladder that was broken was lying on the floor. But the kid wasn't anywheres around. That ladder had been leaning up against the first landing, kind of. Above that there was a long, long ladder fastened to the wall that went all the way up—way up to the top.

Will said, "Well one thing sure, this ladder only just lately got broken, you can see that. Even the place where it's split isn't dirty yet."

"Well if it broke with the kid on it, then why isn't he lying here?" Edgar wanted to know.

"Search me," I said. Boy, I was scared, I didn't know what to make of it.

"Maybe he wasn't hurt," Warde said.

"Then why didn't he come back to the house?" I asked him.

We all just stood there, thinking.

"Maybe he was on his way up and it broke just as he got off it," Edgar said. "Maybe it fell down after he was safe on that next place up there." So I shouted good and loud, "Hey kid, are you up there? What's the matter?"

But we didn't get any answer, and we all stood there just looking at each other. Gee, I know how we kid Pee-wee a lot but just the same when he isn't around you miss him. Because when he's around, he's around a whole lot—*jiminies*, you always know he's there. And you needn't think we don't like him because we're all the time jollyng him along. Only his scout ideas are about six sizes too big for him. It seemed awful funny that he wasn't there, and we didn't know where he was.

"*I like him*," Edgar said, just like that. Good and earnest he said it.

“It’s darned funny,” I said; “it’s got me. If he’s hurt up there, why doesn’t he answer?”

“Unless he’s *more than hurt*,” Warde said.

“What do you mean more than hurt?” I asked him.

Then two or three of us called all at once, good and loud, and there was kind of a sound way up there at the top.

“*Listen!*” one of the fellers said.

“It’s just a bird flying out,” Will said. “Can’t you tell the sound of a bird when it’s scared all of a sudden?”

“If it was a bird it was a pretty big one,” I said.

“Gee, what are we going to do?” Will asked us. “How are we going to get up there?”

“I’m going to be the one to go up, because I’m in his patrol,” Bud Walker said. “This is our business, isn’t it, Jay?”

Could you beat that? Even before there was any patrol at all they were claiming to own Pee-wee. That’s the way it always is—honest. Fellers kid the life out of him and get him good and mad, talking in chunks. Then they want to risk their lives for him. I didn’t say a word.

The two of them went and dragged out a bench from the church and stood it up on end against the wall and told us to hold it. Even Bud and Jay were scrapping which one would stand on it and try to reach up to the platform. But it wasn’t high enough anyway.

“Stand on it and I’ll climb up on your shoulders,” Jay said. “You fellers hold it steady. This new patrol is going to be named the Monkeys.”

They were some pair, those Walker brothers. Gee, they were awful good friends like. Doing things together they were bears. I guess they tried everything fellers can do—carrier pigeons and all kinds of experiments and everything, horseback riding and making small airplanes and all like that. They raised rabbits and sold them, and even they invented kind of a steam engine with a tin can—they were some team. And they were never serious about it. If a pigeon didn’t come back, they should worry, they just started inventing something else to have fun with. I guess it was because they lived where there weren’t any other fellers. Can you beat Pee-wee for luck, running into a pair like that? But I didn’t know much about those fellers till afterward. Believe me, all I was thinking about was Pee-wee.

“Look out you don’t fall,” I said to Jay, while he was climbing up on his brother’s shoulders.

“Look out you don’t let go of the bench,” he said.

All of a sudden Edgar came running in. I didn’t even know he went away. He was all excited. He said, “Come on outside, quick. Don’t bother climbing up, he isn’t up there. Come out and see what I found.”

CHAPTER XVI

TRACKING PEE-WEE

I said to Will, "This will be some patrol if it only gets its leader back."

He said, "That's all that's worrying me now. I'd give a lot for one squirt at that kid. It's blamed funny, I know that; I mean where is he?"

I thought how I looked out through the window down at the farm house and had seen Pee-wee marching up the hill so brave and bold. He was going to show these fellers some real scouting in the wild and woolly wilderness. Now all of a sudden he was gone. I couldn't help thinking that maybe he might be up in the steeple and something was the matter that he couldn't answer us.

All of a sudden, there we were, all looking at a footprint outside the church. It was his all right. Maybe the Silver Foxes don't watch their step, we should worry, but we know other fellers' footprints.

"Look, here's another," Edgar said, "and here's another. You can see he was on his way out, not in."

"You'll do," I said, "all you fellers need is a patrol leader. And *believe me*, you're going to get one. You'll know you've got a boss all right; hey Warde?" I was feeling kind of good because now we knew he wasn't up in that old steeple.

"But where the dickens did he go?" Warde asked us. "He came up here to pike off the country. Why didn't he come back or else wait for us?"

Edgar just kind of shrugged his shoulders and he said, "Dunno; all I know is, he went down there into the village."

"Is that what you call a village?" I said.

He said, "Sure, that's Dawdleboro."

"Believe me," I said, "if that's a village then Claverack or Hatrack or whatever you call it, is a couple of continents. It's villages like that that clog up fountain pens."

I'll say it was some village! I bet you could get a flat tire running over a village like that. It was just down the opposite side of the hill from where Quackenbush's farm house was. We could see plain enough that Pee-wee had gone down there because we could pick out his footprints all the way down in the long grass. Some places we couldn't see the prints but we could see where the grass was crushed down.

"Anyway the kid will be proud of his new patrol," I said. "He'll have them out for the Pathfinder's badge and everything, you see. He uses the big

stick in his patrol leading.”

“We’re game,” Bud said.

“We’ll go anywhere and do anything,” his brother chimed in. “Anything goes with us.”

That was the way with that pair—happy-go-lucky.

Edgar said, “But what gets me is why he didn’t come back to us. He was all full of the thing.”

I said, “Listen, Edgar of Crackerjack. Pee-wee gets all full of a whole lot of things. Maybe he went down there to get full of ice cream cones, how do we know?”

Warde said, “You know he’s wonderful at tracking animals. If he gets on the trail of a hot dog nothing can stop him.”

“Yes but he just had eats,” Edgar said.

“That’s no argument,” I told him. “When he has dinner that just puts the idea into his head. *You ain’t seen nothin’ yet*. You don’t know your new patrol leader. If he went down there for licorice jaw breakers all is well. He won’t be able to talk all the way home.”

“It might only be gum drops,” Warde said.

“He always has static when he eats an apple,” I said.

Will said, “Well anyway, no harm came to him so we needn’t worry. Only, believe me, it’s getting pretty late for a cross country hike.”

“Go as far as you like with us,” Bud said.

“You’ll go far enough before this new patrol busts up,” I told him.

We kept going down the hill, picking our way just where Pee-wee had gone. That side of the hill was longer and not so steep. Pretty soon we began to notice things down there. The stop sign wasn’t being used and there were several cars standing, and the people in them were all looking up the hill. Outside the post office there were four or five people looking up the hill, too. A feller with jumpers on came running out of a kind of a store where there were rakes and wheelbarrows and all things like that standing outside, and he pointed up the hill and went running into another building where it said

THE WEEKLY COUNTY GUARDIAN

Underneath was a drug store or a candy store or something—maybe it was a stationery store, I don’t know. Anyway two men came out in a hurry and one of them went over and set the stop sign so drivers could go. Just the same they didn’t go. Two or three of them parked their cars and waited, all looking up the hill.

“Is it on account of us?” Edgar said.

“Sure it is,” I told him. “Now you see how wonderful it is to be a boy scout. When you come to a village they have a couple of holidays.”

“What the dickens is up?” Will said.

“Search me,” I said; “Dawdleboro is just waking up from its afternoon nap.”

Warde said, “There seems to be an atmosphere of excitement.” He always gets ninety in English Composition, that feller—gee he’s worse than Westy Martin.

By that time we were down almost to the road. Two men came running out of a house and one of them shouted to another man, and then the two of them got in a Ford and, *goood* night, did they speed!

“Maybe they’ve gone after some chocolate bars for Pee-wee,” I said.

CHAPTER XVII

MURDER!

All of a sudden, out of that building where it said WEEKLY COUNTY GUARDIAN came a man with a great big straw hat and suspenders and a great big badge on his suspenders. Boy, he was some hick cop!

“*Good* night, look who’s with him,” I said. “Do you think the kid is pinched?”

IMAGE OMITTED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

“GOOD NIGHT, LOOK WHO’S WITH HIM—DO YOU THINK THE KID IS PINCHED?”

Honest I had to laugh. There was Pee-wee with him, talking and shouting, and a lot of people got around them while they started across the road toward the hill.

“Now I think I know what’s the matter,” I said. “He told them that the world war is over and they’re going to have a celebration.”

“There’s something up,” Warde said, kind of serious.

“Maybe he’s got the sheriff to join his new patrol,” I said. “It looks that way to me.”

So then we came face to face with the whole bunch of them starting up the hill. Some excitement!

I said, “Hey kid, what’s the matter? If we’re not disturbing this peaceful village, how about our bee-line hike? I understood it was going to be a regular one.”

“Do you think I’m going to bother about a bee-line hike?” he shouted at me. “Do you think I’m going to bother with a bee-line hike when I got civilized duties to do? *Geeeee whiz*, do you think I’m going to bother hiking when I found out a *murder*?”

“Explain all that,” I said.

The cop, or whatever he was, said, “You youngsters better stand from under naow; this is serious business. He ain’t goin’ ter go with yer naow, so yer better run along and clear out. He’s held for a mat-terrial witness of a homeyside.”

I guess Pee-wee didn't mind being held. "So you better not even *touch* me now," he said, "because I found a murder and I got to stay here. Even a man in that hotel that's in the movie business telephoned to the Pathe News and even they're going to take my picture how I found it, I bet. Even newspapers in Kingston are coming here—even from New York they're coming, because a man called up. Because I found a murdered man up in that steeple, and even a note that he left how he knew for sure he was going to be murdered. And it's got the initials of the one that did it, too. So I got to be held. Even if I didn't want to I got to be held, because I'm the one that found it out."

Jumping Jiminies, we're all the time laughing at Pee-wee, how he finds tracks of snakes that turn out to be wheelbarrows, and reports people sneaking in back doors when it's only a surprise party, and trails a bandit that was in the movies. But nix on murders. He was funny, but, believe me, we didn't feel much like laughing.

"So you better not interfere with a lot of your nonsense now," he said, "because in the police station they got the paper I found, how the man knew *for sure* he was going to be murdered, and if you start a lot of crazy stuff now, maybe you'll be arrested, so you better look out."

"Who's starting crazy nonsense?" Warde said. "Maybe we're crazy but we don't laugh when there are murders."

Pee-wee said, "Well just the same you better look out and you better not come too near me."

All the while the crowd kept on up the hill. Gee, we didn't know *what* to think, but anyway if you ever wanted to see us good and serious, that was the time. There wasn't any joke about it, I'll say. I guess we were all kind of trembling like. Anyway Warde had some sense. He ran after the man with the badge and he said, "If this little feller can't go back with us, we better telephone to the camp where we belong."

The man said, very short and cross like, "Call 'em up and tell 'em he's *de-tained*. He hain't like to go home to-night." It didn't seem to worry Pee-wee much; I guess he thought he was a hero.

So then we started back down into the village, only Will Dawson went on up over the hill to tell Mr. Quackenbush.

"What are we going to do—stay here?" Warde said.

"I don't know," I told him; "they don't want us. That's the end of the hike anyway. Wait till we see what they say at camp. Believe me, this is some finish for a wild goose chase."

"I don't feel like hiking cross country now," Warde said. "How about you fellers?"

“Anything, anytime, any place, anyhow, that’s our motto,” Jay Walker said.

“I guess I’ll call up my people too,” Edgar said.

In the store there were women talking about it, I guess they were kind of scared to go up to the church. One of them said you couldn’t pay her to see it, and she wouldn’t let her son go, either. Warde got Temple Camp on the phone and Foureyes answered—he’s bookkeeper in Administration Shack. He came back to the phone and said we should all stay and somebody would come in the Ford station car and get us. He said we should tell Pee-wee not to get scared. Can you beat that? And the kid having the time of his life! The other fellers called up their homes, too, and they fixed it so as to wait with us, because we told them the camp car would leave them at their houses.

Then we beat it up the hill.

CHAPTER XVIII

DETAINED

Jiminies, no matter where we went up there, somebody told us to get away. Constable Dense—that was the one with the suspenders—every time he saw us he told us to go away. If you're a feller you always get chased, they won't let you see anything. I guess they would have chased us away altogether if it hadn't been that we stayed near Mr. Quackenbush and he owned part of the hill.

Pretty soon three men came up the hill from a car and one of them had a satchel. Somebody said they were detectives. Mr. Quackenbush said one was the county doctor. They all went up the new ladder that had been put in the steeple. We didn't see Pee-wee or Mr. Dense anywhere. It was getting cold up there on that hill, and the shutters kept banging all the time.

Jiminies, I guess we waited as much as half an hour. A lot more people came too, and one man asked us if we belonged with Pee-wee.

"No, he belongs with us," Warde said. Gee, you'd think that kid was the head of all the police or something. Warde said he guessed the man was from a newspaper. State troopers came too. They wanted to chase us away. Right away as soon as they got there they started clearing us out.

"What harm are we doing?" Edgar asked them.

"Never mind that, get away from here, all of you," one of them said.

We told him we belonged with the scout that discovered the murder and then they didn't say anything. They're a fresh lot, state troopers.

After a while, just before it got dark, the men came down the ladder and Pee-wee was with them. They had a big basket, and everybody crowded around to see, but they wouldn't let us get near. Anyway it was nothing but bones in it, that's what one man said. He said that was all that was left of Reddy Maston. Another said murder will out, no matter how long ago it was.

"Saul Glander is the one done it," an old rube said. "I allus knowed when he went away from here he hed good reasons. He's in Californy naow, but we'll get 'im and fetch 'im back, by thunder."

"Anyway," I said to Warde, "they wouldn't know so much if it wasn't for that note."

"I'd like to see that," Warde said.

"The kid will tell us all about it," said Edgar.

“Come on, let’s go down, it’s too spooky up here,” Bud said. “What’s the good hanging around, there’s nothing to do.”

Then Mr. Quackenbush went up to the constable and he said how they should let Pee-wee come down to the farm house and stay all night. He said that he’d be responsible that Pee-wee stayed until they said it was all right for him to go. “Yer ain’t lookin’ ter hold him in the lock-up, be yer?” he said.

Jiminies, they didn’t know what to do. The way I made it out, the kid had to stay and go to a judge in the morning or something or other. They were going to get out a warrant or something for Saul Glander, even if they didn’t know where he was. Maybe he wasn’t even alive, that’s what Mr. Quackenbush said. He said that man used to work on his farm and he was half crazy.

Anyway we all went to the farm, Pee-wee too. That’s where we waited for the camp car. We all sat around in the sitting room, waiting. I was glad old man Dense, with his suspenders and his badge, went away.

Warde said, “Hey kid, tell us about it.”

“Sure,” I said, “and be sure to stop when you get to the end. We were going to start home on a bee-line hike and the next we knew you stumbled on a murder. Kindly explain all that so that all the class can hear.”

“You needn’t be laughing about it and acting kind of not serious,” he said, “because I’m being *detained*, you can ask Constable Dense if I’m not, and those other men, too, you can ask them because they told him I had to be detained till to-morrow. So you needn’t start a lot of crazy Silver Fox talk about the law or you might get into trouble. So now you can see if I know how to do big things, murders and things like that.

“Now you can see how a scout has to keep looking to see things all the time—he’s got to be observant because maybe another feller that wasn’t a scout wouldn’t of seen that note under the skeleton kind of especially because it was all dirty and faded and they could hardly read it even. Anyway that man knew he was going to get killed—I bet he wrote that note maybe when he was dying, hey? One of the men said he had it all ready to leave because he knew he was going to get killed. So now I bet you fellers are glad you’re going to be in my patrol, because I’m being detained. And now you can see what I did.”

“We’re with you,” Bud said.

“Where you go, we go,” Jay told him.

“Same here,” chimed in Edgar.

“And all we have to get is four more fellers,” Pee-wee said.

Mrs. Quackenbush said, “Well, I’d jes like ter be one of ’em, because you’re right smart. Hain’t he, Seth?”

“Smarter ’n’ a steel trap,” Mr. Quackenbush said. Gee, they were both laughing at him, but they liked him. And anyway we sure did have to hand it to him.

The kid was eating an apple and he kept right on talking. He said, “And you better stay here to-morrow if you want to see something, because the Pathe News people are coming and I’m going to be in the movies with my scout suit on, and newspaper men are coming from New York and everything, and I’m going to have things printed about me how I’m the boy scout that discovered it. Geeeee whiz, you better stay here if you want to see what happens. So now I guess you see for yourself what the Silver Foxes are with all their nonsense. Gee whiz, I’d be ashamed if all I did was have crazy hikes that don’t have any meaning to them. *Geeeee whiz!*”

“That’s jes every word true,” Mrs. Quackenbush said. “And I jes wish they *could* stay and see all that fuss they’ll make over you. You’re a sight smarter than Darius Dense, I’ll say that much.”

Mr. Quackenbush said, “Well youngster, we got ter thank yer fer puttin’ Dawdleboro on the map. We ain’t hed no sech rumpus here since Marthy Berry run away with that travellin’ salesman feller; did we Mary?”

All of a sudden the telephone bell rang and it was Councillor Fretter from camp and he told Mr. Quackenbush the Ford car broke down near Baxter’s Corners and could he keep us at the farm till the next day. That’s the first time I ever liked that Ford. Mr. Quackenbush said sure he would keep us, even he’d be glad to.

“Tell him I got to be detained,” Pee-wee said. Jiminies, I was glad on account of the doings next day. “Sure we’ll stay with Pee-wee,” I said.

“United we stand——”

“Will you shut up with that,” the kid shouted at me. “No matter what happens you always say it—you think it’s smart. And you needn’t think you’re going to be in the Pathe News with me either.”

“Are you going to be eating an apple?” I asked him.

“I’m going to stand up at the old church,” he said. “And you needn’t be standing around kidding if newspaper reporters talk to me either.”

“We ought to be right close to you,” I said. “United we stand——”

Oh boys, those fellers were laughing. Even Mr. and Mrs. Quackenbush were laughing.

So then Mr. Quackenbush got Edgar’s house on the phone and said he was going to stay all night. First we were afraid he couldn’t fix it. “Tell them Pee-wee’s *detained*,” I said, “and we’ve got to stand united——”

“Will you shut up!” he shouted at me.

It was all right because Mr. Quackenbush knew Edgar’s people so well; I guess they were close friends.

But, oh boy, I wish you could have heard those Walker brothers talking to their father on the phone. Laugh! Boy, but they're some sketch, that pair. First Bud said that Jay was staying and he wouldn't leave his brother. Then Jay got on the wire and said Bud was staying and he couldn't leave him alone; he said Bud had nails in his shoes and he wouldn't leave him. Then Bud got on again and told his father to be sure to feed their raccoon. Some team work!

“United they stand——” I started.

That's how I got the rest of the apple away from Pee-wee. First I get his goat, then I get his apple.

So long, I'll see you to-morrow morning.

CHAPTER XIX THE CHURCH STEEPLE

We slept in two dandy big rooms where they used to have summer boarders. I guess Pee-wee was hoping to be locked in, but he wasn't. I had a dream that the kid murdered a big white goose to get a pie the goose was holding in his bill after he stole it out of a bakery wagon, and he threw the goose in the river and it got picked up by some girl scouts in a ferry boat and it wasn't dead at all, only it broke its collar bone and it wanted to go on a hike with us so it wrote me a letter and Pee-wee gave that letter to the police and the goose got good and mad and flew over a church steeple and the steeple fell down and Pee-wee stabbed me with it because I said "United we stand, divided we sprawl." Gee it was a crazy dream.

The next morning dawned bright and fair—I got that out of a book. Right away things started. Even before we had breakfast two men came in a car and they belonged to a newspaper that has pictures, the Daily Smudge. They got Pee-wee to go up the hill to the church and then they took his picture, and it was going to say under it,

BOY SCOUT MAKES GRUESOME FIND.

Pee-wee stood up before the camera, scowling, very brave like.

"Do you want to take a picture of the new patrol I'm starting too?" the kid asked them.

"Not so you'd notice it," Edgar said.

"Anything suits us," the Walker brothers said.

But the men didn't bother, all they wanted was Pee-wee. After a while men came from the *Morning Smear* too, and took a picture of him stooping down and picking up the old letter and reading it. *Scout finds weird missive*—that's what they said it was going to be.

I said, "Hey mister, do you want to interview him? He was born at an early age and before he was six months old he had started fifty-two patrols. I can give you all the facts of his life. He began as a tenderfoot scout and worked his way down to the pantry where he won the traffic badge by putting an end to the jam, didn't he Warde?"

We even had those newspaper men laughing at him, they couldn't help it. I told them, "If you want to print his advice to boy scouts you can say he's in favor of abolishing the time between meals and he believes in

starting three patrols at a time, he got the idea from three helpings of dessert, and his favorite pastime is civilized duties.”

“Don’t you pay any attention to them, they’re crazy,” the kid said to them.

Jiminies, but things happened fast. Constable Dense came over and got the kid to go where there was a judge and say how he found the letter. “You better not be eating an apple in front of the judge,” I told him. He marched off good and proud.

“I bet he gets the judge into his patrol,” Bud Walker said.

While he was gone the camp car came with Councilor Fretter and Brent Gaylong (he’s a big feller) and three or four scouts. One of them had a camera. As soon as Pee-wee got back they were taking his picture. I guess to send to scout magazines. *Some excitement!* An awful nice feller named Mr. Scooper came from a newspaper in New York and he made Pee-wee tell all about it, and he said he was going to print it just like if Pee-wee wrote it himself. *Scout’s own story about murder church.* I said, “Good night, now we got another famous author in our troop.”

Pretty soon, *good night*, a couple of men came in an airplane and they landed in the big field near the hill. Those were the news-reel men. Gee, we all got around them, even Councilor Fretter was glad because he said it all helped scouting.

I said, “Hey Councilor, do you think maybe we’ll be having a holiday on Pee-wee’s birthday?”

He was laughing and he said, “Stranger things than that have happened. Walter is sure the hero of the day.”

Pee-wee started shouting at me, “You’re so crazy and you think you’re so smart, I was born in the summer during vacation and the holiday wouldn’t do you any good anyway.”

“No sooner said than stung,” I told him.

So then everybody went up to the church and old Constable Dense was there with his badge and his big straw hat and his suspenders and everything. That was some day for Dawdleboro, all right. And it was some day for Pee-wee. Brent Gaylong and Councilor Fretter just stood there laughing while the man turned the crank taking the kid’s picture as he was coming out of the church with the letters. They made him do it three or four times. Then they had him put his hand up to shade his eyes and look down to the village. Then they had him stand with Bud and Jay and Edgar and they said it would tell on the news-reel that he was starting a patrol.

“Good night,” I said, “now he’ll be getting letters from fellers all over the country wanting to join.

“Don’t you let the Silver Foxes be in it,” the kid shouted at Mr. Longshot. As soon as I moved he shouted at me, “Don’t you try to get in it with a lot of your crazy stuff because this shows how a boy scout really did something. Anyway it’s better to be in the movies than to write crazy stories.”

“That shows how much he don’t know about English literature,” Warde said.

“Hey Bud,” I called, “stand with both feet on the ground and look as if you were primitive.”

Then they took a picture of Pee-wee running down the hill to tell the authorities. And then they took one of him handing the letter to Constable Dense, and they made Constable Dense take off his big straw hat and wave it at the camera.

“I’m going to spend thirty cents to see that on the screen,” I said. “Boy, oh boy, don’t miss it.”

I shouted to Pee-wee, “Now you see what happens when you go on a hike with me. Stick to the Silver Foxes and you get famous.” He was so important he wouldn’t even look at me at all.

Jiminies, the whole village was up there, scouts from camp taking snapshots and everything. That day they let people go up in the steeple because there was nothing more up there. A lot of us went up and it was pretty spooky, all cobwebs and bats and everything. The bats were hanging like dried rags. There was a kind of a little place way up high, where the old bell was, and we could look out through open places. That was where Pee-wee made his big discovery. Oh boy, some view! We could even see the Hudson.

I said, “If they’ll start a smudge at Temple Camp and keep it going all day, I bet we could bee-line right from here.”

“How could we get across the Hudson?” one of the scouts wanted to know.

“We should worry till we get to it,” I said. “Let’s ask Fretter if we can—what do you say?”

“Pee-wee will be too excited about getting back to camp,” another one said. “He’ll go back in the car so he can start right away being a hero. Maybe they’ll be giving him dinners all around, like Lindbergh, hey? He wouldn’t listen to a hike now.”

All the while Bud, who was up there with us, wasn’t saying anything. I thought maybe it was because he felt kind of bashful with those new fellers from camp.

I said, “Does it make you kind of dizzy way up here, Bud?”

“Sure,” he said, “let’s go down, I think in about five minutes I’m going to faint.”

I said, “I hope you don’t fall to the ground in a faint up here. Believe me, you’ll have a good long drop.”

He said, “Come on down, I think I’m going to faint.”

And the scouts started looking at him, and I really believed him then. But, jiminyes, I couldn’t see why any feller would faint up there because there was a kind of solid woodwork all around. But just the same it was pretty high. Anyway I didn’t think Bud Walker was that kind—he always said the sky was the limit with him.

Anyway we all went down.

CHAPTER XX

BUD'S PERSISTENCE

When we got down to the ground there were even more people, all gaping around and talking. And Pee-wee was shouting about what scouts do. Even Councilor Fretter from camp was laughing at him. But anyway I didn't notice anything because Alston Bradley (he's in a Virginia troop at camp) he kind of nudged me and he said, "Look who's here—what do you call that?"

Oh boy, I had to laugh. Because there was the funniest looking man I ever saw. He was standing sort of away from everybody with his face all screwed up, looking up at the steeple. I guess nobody dared to go near him, he was so shriveled up. He didn't have any hat on and was he bald? Believe me, without his hat he was half naked. He had funny eye glasses way down on the end of his nose, and he had a long black coat on. Gee, he reminded me of school.

I said, "Where did that blow in from?"

Will said, "Maybe he came to interview Pee-wee."

"Maybe we're going to have examinations," I said. "It looks like mathematics to me."

"I guess it's the village undertaker," one feller said.

Just then a little country feller that was hanging around us said, "I know who he is, he's boarding in the village—he's staying at Tanner's farm."

"Is he alive?" I asked him.

The boy said, "Sure, his name is Professor Snoopfossle."

"Some name to get wished onto him," I said.

Now I'm going to tell you just what I saw—just how it happened. Somebody was taking a snapshot of Pee-wee standing with Constable Dense and the constable looked very big and important—not saying how Pee-wee looked. I thought all the newspapers this side of Mars already had pictures of him. All of a sudden Bud Walker went right up to Mr. Dense and said, "Will you please let me look at the note you were using for the news-reel, if it's the real one?"

Boy, you should have seen that man stare at him.

"Will you get away from here while I'm having my picture taken with officials!" the kid yelled at him.

The big constable just gave Bud a shove out of the way and he said, "Clear outer here 'fore yer git yerself locked up." Gee, it made me mad, the way he did it.

Bud just stood there till after they took the snapshot, and then Mr. Scooper that came from a newspaper said they should stand just that way till he got one too. All the while Bud just stood there waiting. One thing, he wasn't a-scared of anybody, that's sure. I guess that's when I started liking that feller a lot. Gee, they were full of fun and ready for anything, those two brothers. But you couldn't scare either one of them.

He just went up to the constable again and he said, "Will you please let me look at that letter?"

That man took hold of him by the collar and he said, "Naow looker here, youngster, if you keep buzzin' roun' here 'n' botherin' folks yer goin' ter git yerself in the lock-up. Now clear away, all o' you youngsters, and git from under."

Bud kind of fixed his collar straight again and he went right up to him and said, "Will you please let me look at that letter?"

Oh boy, I never saw such a look as that constable gave him. I think he was just going to grab him. I was kind of trembling all over. Councilor Fretter was just coming over to lead Bud away. Everybody crowded around. Even Pee-wee kept still, but he was scowling at Bud. Mr. Quackenbush put his arm over Bud's shoulder and tried to walk away with him, but Bud stuck like glue.

"I want to see that letter and I got a right to see it," he said.

"All right then," Mr. Dense said, all the while snapping his teeth, "we got a place daown below fer youngsters that cain't be made ter mind our taown police—we'll jes see if anybody kin de-fy the law in Dawdleboro." He came away from Pee-wee and made a grab for Bud and clutched him good and tight by the collar. Oh boy, but I was mad to see it. Kind of in my fingers I was trembling.

I don't know what would have happened, but all of a sudden in stepped that old professor, pushing people away, and he stood right plunk in front of the constable looking at him over the top of his glasses. He said, "What's the reason you can't show this boy your precious paper? Well then, show it to me; I ask to see it. And maybe this boy and I can give you newspaper and moving picture people some better stuff than you looked for. My name is Professor Felix Snoopfossle of Hydome University, and I ask to see that paper, before I get a court order to see it. I'll give my reason afterwards. I think this comedy has gone far enough."

Everybody waited; gee nobody said a word. Mr. Dense, I guess he was going to talk back, but he decided not to. "'Tain't no use ter the public," he said, all the while fishing it out of his overalls pocket.

"Well that will be for me to say," the old professor said. "I haven't had a good laugh since I've been summering in this sequestered vale. But

something tells me I'm going to have one now.”

Jiminies, I didn't even know he knew how to laugh.

CHAPTER XXI

THE LETTER

The next thing I knew I was tip-toeing up and reading that letter over the professor's shoulder. I couldn't see anything so funny about it. But the next thing I knew, Bud Walker was lying on the ground screaming and kicking his legs. Of course his brother had to do the same thing—they always do the same thing, that pair. Everybody looked surprised. Gee, I couldn't see anything so very funny.

I said, "What's the big idea? Let us in on it." Because that's the Silver Foxes' middle name, "laughing."

"Maybe you think it's so funny where a *murder* was," Pee-wee said very disgusted. "That's what you learned from the Silver Foxes, laughing at *tragedies* even. You wouldn't be laughing so hard if you got murdered yourself. Even you make a show of yourselves before *newspapers* even."

I said, "Hey Bud, will you please kindly tell us what it is?"

"You better get up, you'll catch cold," said Pee-wee.

Edgar just looked at me, I guess he didn't know what to make of it.

"Don't ask me," I said. "The two of them have gone out of their senses."

Bud started trying to say something, but all he could get out was, "Rink—rink—rink——"

"Try again," Will told him. "Give us a couple more syllables. Hold your feet still."

"Rink—rink—rink——" Jay kept laughing. "Ooooooh, let me die in peace!"

"You'll die in pieces if you don't let up on that," I said.

Bud sat up and tried to talk, but he fell back again. Even the old Professor Snoopfossle had to laugh at them.

"Some pair," I said. "They don't need a patrol, they need a patrol wagon."

Bud sat up and managed to sputter out something. "D-did the cam-cam-cam-camera men g-ggo way yet?"

I said, "No, do you want them to take your picture?"

"They wouldn't take pictures of crazy fools!" Pee-wee shouted.

Jay couldn't speak at all, he was just rolling on the grass.

Bud sat up holding his knees and tried to speak, "It's—it's—it's——"

"Three strikes out," I said.

“It’s—it’s—from—it’s—it was on the ppppp-igeon. It was writ—writ—writ—ten—by Rink——”

“Cut it out and tell us,” I said. “This might go on for years.”

“It was written by—by—by—Rinkey McKidder,” he said. “It was fixed onto the pigeon. I don’t know—I don’t know—know where the pigeon is—but that’s the note, isn’t it Jay?”

I said, “Don’t talk to Jay, he’s dead. What do you mean, the pigeon?”

He said, “Just that. When I was up—up—up——”

“Going up,” I said.

“When I was up in the steeple I picked up the ring that was around the ppigeon’s leg. Didn’t I tell you I expected to faint? He’s, he’s crazy, Rinkey McKidder is; he’s worse than you fellers. He’s hiking up and bringing Sam Gordon with him—read—read—the letter.” He got up on his feet all covered with grass and brushed his hair out of his eyes.

“Now you look like a Silver Fox,” I told him. “Will you please keep still a minute while we read the letter.” Jay he was still kicking on the ground. “Let him kick,” I said.

So now I’m going to show you the letter that the poor murdered man left—not. Because when we got back to camp we tacked it up on the bulletin board outside Administration Shack. Afterwards I took it home with me and if you want a real letter that a carrier pigeon had fastened to his leg I’ll swap it for an ice cream cone F. O. B. only you don’t get any pigeon because nobody ever saw him again, and if you should see him out west anywhere, or down south, you can please tell him that he left his letter in the church steeple in Dawdleboro and if he wants it he better fly to Bridgeboro where I live and I’ll give it to him.

So now this was the letter and it was all faded and dirty and everything, I guess. But any fool could tell it wasn’t as old as a skeleton. Even I could tell that, and I’m as much of a fool as anybody. So this was the way it read, only some parts of it were kind of hard to make out:

I don’t know if you’ll ever get this. I think I’ll be dead by tomorrow and you’ll know S. G. is to blame. I tried not to let him know I was back but he found out.

He’s been following me around all day and I can’t get away from him. I’m writing this in the dark in the shed so he won’t know I’m home. But I know he’s hanging around. He doesn’t let me out of his sight.

Don’t blame me—it can’t be helped. If I have to make the sacrifice I will. I knew the way it would be. He nearly killed me before. You’ll know all I said was true and if it comes to the worst,

I die game. But if my dead body is found anywhere, you'll know he did it. And I hope he'll be brought to justice.

Hope you get this but have my doubts.

R. M.

By the time I read it, everyone was taking a look at it, and pretty soon Bud was able to talk. Even now he can't talk with a straight face, and it's six months ago. But he was able to talk. He said Sam Gordon was always wanting to hike with Rinkey and it was a kind of a joke how they were all the time trying not to let him know. He said Rinkey was kind of crazy like us and that's why he wrote in that funny way. He said, "It sounds just like Rinkey, doesn't it Jay?" But he didn't get any answer from Jay, that crazy Indian.

Then Professor Snoopfossle said, "My knowledge of homing pigeons is somewhat limited." Gee, he talked fine. He said, "But the letter has evidently reached its proper recipient. There is one thing, however, that I can certify to. The bones which I saw in a basket down in the village are the bones of the lower order. They may be the bones of a chimpanzee. I incline to the thought that they are the bones of a gorilla. The mystery of how such a creature got into the steeple of an American village church remains still to be solved."

"*I can solve it, I can solve it!*" Pee-wee shouted. "And besides I'm going to get two new members for my patrol, Rinkey and that other feller, and it's a dandy mistake because now I got six fellers, and I only need two more, so anyway it's good I went up there and a patrol is even better than a murder, so you can see what scouts can do—serious things—even kind of I *prevented* a murder, and that gorilla comes from a circus. I can prove it!"

"It's good he's dead or you'd have seven members," I said. "With the pigeon and the gorilla you'd have a full patrol. Hurray for Dawdleboro! Hurray for Sherlock Nobody Holmes, the village sleuth!"

Councilor Fretter was smiling all over. He said, "I'm afraid you'll have to let the boys have their laugh, Constable Dense."

"I know what the gorilla died of," I shouted; "Dawdleboro was too slow for him, I don't blame him."

All of a sudden that news-reel man, Mr. Longshot, pulled a lot of film out of his camera and he wound it all around Pee-wee and he said, "Scout, the next time you're stringing anybody, use this. Here's where you don't get on the silver screen."

"Don't I get two new members?" Pee-wee shouted at him. "That shows how much you don't know about scouting, how it's important to get

members, I'll leave it to Councilor Fretter if it isn't. Every time I make a mistake it's a dandy one, that shows how I help scouting, can I help it if a feller in Poughkeepsie writes a crazy letter?"

Me, I was thinking about that feller Rinkey McKidder. I was wishing I could get him into my patrol.

"Well anyway," Warde said, "Dawdleboro is on the map."

"I invented it, I mean I put it there," the kid shouted.

"Sure," I said, "and it's in the *Daily Smudge* and the *Morning Smear* too."

"I guess we'll have to phone the papers if those men have gone," Councilor Fretter said. "Well this has proved a big diversion for Dawdleboro. I think they ought to put up a statue to Scout Harris. How about that, Constable Dense?"

But Constable Dense didn't pay any attention, he was starting away. Good night for him.

I said to Edgar, "Hey Ed, how do you like our crazy hikes, positively guaranteed? What do you think of your new patrol leader?"

"Are you going to listen to him, or are you going to be a real scout?" Pee-wee hollered at him.

"Let's call it the Gorillas," Edgar said.

CHAPTER XXII

4+3=7

If you think that's the end you're mistaken. What do we care about a gorilla? We had so many animals connected with that hike I ought to name it Roy Blakeley's Circus Parade—gorillas, geese, pigeons, everything. We should worry. So now you saw Dawdleboro, and if you ever go up that way look out you don't stumble over it. If you see a big tall man who looks like a rube, with a badge on his suspenders, turning the stop sign for autos, ask him how the gorillas are coming up this year. That's Constable Dense. Tell him we send our regards and ask if he's getting many letters from skeletons.

Believe me, we were collecting members all right. The only thing that saved the gorilla was, he was dead, lucky for him. Pee-wee had one member from Claverack and two members from some place near Claverack, and now he was getting three from Poughkeepsie. Because pretty soon after the excitement was all over, along the road came three fellers, hiking. We were just going to all pile into the Temple Camp station wagon.

The biggest feller said to me, "We're hunting for a place. Can you tell me where it is?" I don't know, but right away I kind of knew it was Rinkey McKidder.

I said, "What place?"

He said, "Any place."

Just then out came Bud and Jay from the farm house.

"Oh look who's here," Bud said. "Hey Jay, look who's here, and look what he brought with him."

"Did you expect me to send them by the pigeon?" Rinkey said. "We're looking for your home; can you tell us where it is?"

"We're on our way there now," Bud said. "Take it from us we've had some circus here."

So then we told him the whole business. He said, "It's too bad we didn't get here while the murders were going on; I'd like to get these two fellers murdered, they insisted on following me."

"Don't you care," I said, "we'll punish them by putting them in Pee-wee's patrol."

"No news of the pigeon?" Rinkey asked.

"I don't know where they all go to," Jay said. "All I know is, they never come back."

Rinkey said, "He started on schedule time in Poughkeepsie. Guess he ran out of gas or something. Well, here we are come to visit you. Do you happen to be going home soon? I refuse to take any more pigeons home with me. All I do is hike between your place and Poughkeepsie, carting pigeons one way and boys another. This has got to stop. That's the seventh pigeon I've released. I don't know where they go, I should think one would reach you by accident. Practically I broadcast them."

He was awful funny, I liked him, that feller. The other two of them were named Sam Gordon and Stubby Waite. The way I made it out, the Walkers used to live in Poughkeepsie and ever since they moved up near Claverack, Rinkey had been hiking up, and every time some fellers wanted to hike with him. He said every time he went home he took a carrier pigeon in a market basket. He said he had a lot of market baskets.

"I think you eat them, that's what I think," Jay said.

Warde said, "Well anyway, one of them got part way back, we can prove that by Pee-wee."

"No wonder he didn't get back with such a crazy note," Bud said.

Rinkey said, "It was written with murder in my heart and I'll get rid of Sam Gordon yet. The next time I send a note by a carrier pigeon I'm going to register it. Have you ever tried a cat, Bud? A cat always comes back. I'll be glad to release a cat if you want me to."

I kind of looked sideways at Councilor Fretter because I knew he wouldn't stand for it, and I said, "If Councilor Fretter would have them start a smudge fire at camp, we could all take a bee-line hike back there. We could see it most all the way."

"It makes no difference to me where I go," Rinkey said. "Most all places are pretty much alike."

The Councilor said No we better not do that, we had enough adventures since we left camp. We'd better start off and leave Edgar and the Walker boys and their friends at their homes.

"Please let us do it, please let us do it," Pee-wee started shouting, "because I want to show them a bee-line hike—a real one—because they're all going to be in my new patrol, ain't you?"

"Absolutely," Rinkey said.

The Councilor was just going to say No again, when *good night*, along came a car and it had Edgar's mother and father in it, and Jay and Bud's mother too.

"We came to see the scout hero," they said.

"Isn't it dreadful about the murder?" Mrs. Chase said.

So then the camp councilor told them all about it and they all had a good laugh, Mr. and Mrs. Quackenbush and all. Jiminies, I never saw grown-up

people laugh so hard. Mrs. Chase said it was just killing.

“That’s just what it wasn’t,” Rinkey said. Then he said, “I really think it would be a very good idea to follow Scout Pee-wee. We may find one of the lost pigeons, who knows? Doesn’t it seem rather tame to all go home in a car?”

“Sure it does,” Pee-wee shouted, “so will you let Bud and Jay and Edgar hike to our camp with us and they can stay all night because we got a big cabin for guest scouts and we’ll send them home in the car to-morrow, positively sure, won’t we Councilor Fretter? And the other three fellers, we’ll send them home with Bud and Jay too. So will you let them have a bee-line hike to camp from here so they can see what scouting is, because now I got seven fellers counting myself, so will you?”

Mrs. Walker said, “I should think you would count for about four. I guess it would be all right, I don’t know why not, if the Councilor is willing, and if Rink and his companions aren’t too tired.”

“What do you mean *tired*?” Jay said. “He always gets hitches. He always comes walking in staggering, but most of the time he’s hitch-hiking. Don’t worry about him.”

Rinkey said, “I always get there, and that’s more than you can say for your pigeons.”

“You old tramp,” Bud said. “How long are you going to stay this time? Till school opens?”

So that was the way we fixed it and after those grown-up people made a little call at Quackenbush’s, they drove away again. They waved their hands to Pee-wee. Councilor Fretter promised that as soon as he got to camp he’d have some of the scouts start a big smudge signal on the hill and keep it going all day. He said that in the afternoon he’d have a launch from the boating club in Catskill patrolling up and down the river at about the right place so as to take us over whenever we happened to reach the shore. First he wasn’t going to let us do it, then he thought it was a dandy idea. Gee, he’ll always help you if he thinks it’s a good idea. But nix on some of these councilors, especially Daggett, I think he was born at a funeral.

I called after him, “To be on the safe side you better have some news-reel men there, and a couple of dozen newspaper reporters.”

“You boys will get the right kind of welcome to Temple Camp,” he called back to us. “Temple Camp knows how to take care of that.”

He’s not so bad, Councilor Fretter. But you ought to see Trustee Nixon—boy, he’s some grizzly bear.

So long, we’re going to start pretty soon now.

CHAPTER XXIII ON THE WATCH

The worst is yet to come. Now you see what it's like, going on one of my hikes, they're all worse than each other. Anyway, now pretty soon you're going to see some fun. Stick to us and you'll get back to Temple Camp, not saying how.

Pee-wee said, "It's going to be good, we got a lot of fellers and we got the whole day before us."

Will said, "We don't care if it's before us or to one side of us or in back of us or where. Come on, let's go up on the hill and wait for the smudge beacon."

So then we all said good-bye to Mr. Quackenbush and Mrs. Quackenbush and we went up on the hill and sat around playing mumbly-peg. We wouldn't have to look for the beacon for about maybe almost an hour because it would take Councilor Fretter maybe three-quarters of an hour to get back and then he'd have to send some scouts up on the hill to start the smudge. That bunch, they're never around when you want them. Anyway it was fun sprawling around up there waiting. We couldn't get into the church steeple because they had it nailed up, I guess on account of gorillas.

Pee-wee was asking Rinkey if he and those other fellers would join his patrol. I had to laugh because they all lived in different places.

Rinkey said, "Positively, I'll join any patrol, any time, anywhere."

I said, "You don't even know what a patrol is, do you?"

He said, "I haven't the slightest idea."

"He'll do anything," Bud said. "When he's visiting us he'll do anything he can't finish."

"He's as crazy as you are," Jay said.

Rinkey said, "If you enjoy doing a thing, what's the use of finishing it?"

"You got to finish when you come to the end," Pee-wee shouted at him.

"Not if you begin at the end and go toward the beginning," Rinkey said.

"Do you call that an argument?" the kid shouted.

"He doesn't ever argue," Bud said. "He does anything you want him to do, he's a nut."

"Don't you want to be a scout?" the kid asked him.

"If the scouts get in my way I'll join them," Rinkey said.

"Then will you join my patrol?"

“Why not?” Rinkey said.

“Even if it’s at Temple Camp?”

“I haven’t got anything against Temple Camp,” Rinkey said.

“Don’t you care where you are?”

“Not as long as I’m some place.”

“You got to be *some* place,” the kid shouted at him.

“Then what’s the use of objecting?” Rinkey said.

“Objecting to what?” Pee-wee yelled.

“Anything.”

“Geeee whiz, you’re a funny feller.”

“We don’t mind him, we’re used to him,” Jay said.

“Don’t you believe in *destinations*?” the kid wanted to know.

Rinkey said, “I’ve never seen one, I should think they might be nice.”

“You have to have a destination when you start,” the kid said, all excited.

“Then what’s the use of going after one?” Rinkey said.

Bud said, “Don’t mind him, he was born that way. He’ll even make a good member because he doesn’t want to have his own way.”

Rinkey said, “What difference does it make whose way I have, as long as I have one?”

“Gee whiz, do you call that logic?” the kid shouted. “I bet you like crazy stuff, *now I can tell.*”

“He likes everything,” Jay said.

The kid said, “If you don’t have a destination it isn’t a hike. That’s like the Silver Foxes, they start out and don’t go anywhere and they call it a hike.”

I said, “You better look out what you say in front of the Silver Foxes behind their backs.” I said, “Hey Rinkey, do you know why Pee-wee’s patrol never goes on a crazy hike?”

He said, “No, why?”

“Because he hasn’t got any patrol,” I said. Warde said, “When you get to camp we’ll show you all the non members of Pee-wee’s patrol.”

“And I’ll show you how everybody says the Silver Foxes are monkeys,” the kid shouted. “Even they got called down for telling a poor little tenderfoot that he couldn’t get the bee-keeping badge till he got stung by a bee. You’ll see, they’re nothing but a joke in camp. They walk around the cooking shack and call it a good turn.”

“Every time we took a hike we put it back again,” I said. “A scout’s honor is to be toasted, I’ll leave it to Warde and Will.”

“There are five more of them and they’re just as bad,” the kid yelled. “They absorb their leader, that’s what Mr. Temple says.”

“If I catch any of them absorbing me they’ll be very sorry that they’re glad they regret it,” I said.

Jiminies, don’t you think we’re spoofy? That’s all we were doing, just sprawling around pulling wads of grass and throwing them at each other and kidding Pee-wee along. Bud and Jay were lying on their backs and kicking their legs and laughing. Those two other fellers that came with Rinkey were sitting there smiling; I guess they were kind of bashful. Edgar was playing mumbly-peg all by himself because none of us would stick to it. Pee-wee was sitting there with a scowl on his face.

Rinkey said, “How do you suppose the gorilla got up in the steeple?”

I said, “That’s easy, he walked up.”

He said, “Well I guess a hawk chased the pigeon in there and then carried him off. There are several other important letters of mine somewhere.”

“Are you going to watch for the smudge beacon or not?” Pee-wee wanted to know.

Rinkey said, “How about these smudge beacons; how do they keep them going? How do they make them anyway?”

“I’ll tell you,” Pee-wee shouted, “I know all about them. They’re the main things in scouting—all different kinds of signals. You got to have them if you’re lost.”

“I’ll tell you,” I said. “If you’re away from camp and you get lost, the first thing you do is to go right straight to camp and tell them to start a smudge signal, then——”

“*Will you shut up while I tell him!*” Pee-wee screamed at me. “If they think you’re lost they start a smudge and it’s sort of kind of like a—it’s a kind of a wet fire.”

“Sometimes they use dry water,” I said. “First you tell them if you’re going to get lost—please keep still while I explain to Rinkey.”

“It smokes all up and guides you back,” the kid yelled.

“Suppose you don’t want to go back,” Rinkey said.

“You mean you *want to be lost?*” the kid hollered at him.

“Don’t I have to get lost if I want to be a scout?” Rinkey asked him.

“Not on *purpose*” the kid shouted.

Pee-wee said, “You better look out, you’re going to get just like the Silver Foxes if you don’t look out.”

That’s all we were doing, just sitting there waiting, you know how we do. All of a sudden away off in the west there was a line of black smoke going straight up—Edgar was the first one to see it. We were all excited except Rinkey—that feller never gets excited. Boy, that smudge was a good one!

Rinkey said, "Is that it?"

"Sure it's it," Pee-wee said. "Now absolutely sure positively we know the way to camp. Now you see the way they do, they put wet leaves on top of the fire and it'll keep smoking all day, you see. Even if we try to we can't get lost."

Warde stood up on a rock and started shouting, "Hurrah for the beacon! Back to camp! Now for a bee-line hike!"

"Positively no more crazy nonsense," I said.

CHAPTER XXIV

WEST BY THE COMPASS

Just like I said, it turned out to be a parade—there were ten of us. Only the two fellers that came with Rinkey didn't talk much. We went across fields and over another hill, and we could see the smudge beacon all the time—gee it was easy. Pretty soon we got into some woods and then it wasn't so easy to see it.

The way we did, when we came down the hill before we went into the woods, we took a good look at the smudge and then we lined our hike up (that's the way we say), with Pee-wee's compass. So that we wouldn't need the smudge signal while we were in the woods where we couldn't see it.

I don't know if you know anything about Pee-wee's compass but he got it in an army and navy store and it's the compass that won the war. It's absolutely, positively, definitely, surely, perfect. It's made out of gun-metal and a real soldier used it, that's what he says. If anybody wants it he can have it if he'll take Pee-wee too. I think it's the one that General Pershing used when he didn't cross the Alps. Gee, I don't know how Columbus ever got to America without it. Anyway it's the one Pee-wee used when he discovered Bennett's Ice-cream Parlor. It fits on his belt in the front so you can all the time look at it.

Jay Walker said, "How are we going to follow the smudge signal while we're in the woods?"

"That shows how much you don't know about scouting," the kid shouted at him. "All we got to do is look at the compass now and see which way the smudge is and then go that way, so we'll be going right toward it all the time."

"That's what scouts call dead reckoning," I told them. "Some times it isn't dead, it's only a little sick, then we use first aid unless it's a second class scout and then we use second aid. If you want to know anything about scouting ask me."

"Will you stop talking while I stand still!" the kid shouted at me.

So then we all stood around him and took a good look at his compass while he stood still. By that we could tell that the smudge was just exactly west of where we were, so we had to go straight west through the woods.

"I hope the compass isn't mistaken," Rinkey said.

"How can a compass be mistaken?" the kid shouted. "That shows how much you don't know about the facts of nature that compasses always point

to the north—*geeee whiz!*”

Rinkey said, “I think it would be better if they had them point different ways, so if you happen to be going west you can get one that points west.”

Warde said, “Sure, why not? When you buy a railroad ticket, you buy it to the place you’re going to go to. You ought to have a compass that points the same way. It ought to point the way back, too.”

“It’s funny they have them all pointing north,” Rinkey said.

“Now you’re going to be like the Silver Foxes,” the kid said to him. “They go every which way and they don’t care where they go.”

“That’s the place to go to if you want to have fun,” I said.

“*Do you call every which way a place?*” he screamed at me.

“It’s where you said we go to,” I told him.

“Will you have some sense and look what we’re going to do now?” he said.

“All right, we’re going straight west,” Rinkey said.

So then we went into the woods and every little while we stopped and looked at Pee-wee’s compass to make sure we were going straight west. We had to laugh at the kid, how he’d stop very proud like, while we all got around to take a look at the compass.

“Somehow I don’t trust it,” Rinkey said. “How are you going to tell which is the right way in woods like this?”

“*You mean you don’t trust a compass?*” the kid yelled at him. “*You don’t trust facts of nature?*”

Rinkey said, awful funny like, while he was squinting at the compass, “I was told by Bud and Jay that pigeons fly home. I suppose that’s a fact of nature. I never met one yet that would go home. I was told that if I’m lost I’d go round in a circle. I was lost once and I went in a straight line, then in a triangle, then in a rectangle and then in a double spiral to a place fourteen miles from where I started. I was told that a bee always flies in a straight line, but one of them went a couple of hundred feet out of his course to sting me. I was told that if a hoptoad comes out at night it won’t rain for three days. So I started back from the Walker homestead and got soaked. The only fact of nature I believe in is an umbrella.”

“Do you call an umbrella a fact of nature?” the kid yelled at him. “It’s a thing that you *make*.”

“Well so is a compass,” Rinkey said. “I never saw one growing on a tree. And besides, every tree I ever met is a rail spelled backwards. If the leaves hang down it’s going to be cold. So I wore my sweater and was roasted alive. I wouldn’t even believe a Christmas tree.”

Gee, we were all laughing; all the time we were hiking through the woods. I could see that Bud and Jay were glad we liked Rinkey. They were

always jumping and dancing around, those two fellers, playing leap-frog and everything.

Warde said, "You may be right about that, Rinkey."

"Yes and you may be crazy about it," Pee-wee shouted. "Do you believe in the North Pole?"

"I don't even believe in the equator," Rinkey said.

"Don't you know a compass points to the North Pole?" the kid hollered. "Even it's got to whether it wants to or not. A compass is a *discovery*."

"I thought you bought it in an army and navy store," I said.

"It's an invention of a discovery," he said. "How do you suppose soldiers could go the right way with this very one, maybe? Geeeee whiz, you needn't start a lot of crazy nonsense about facts of nature."

Anyway we kept going straight west, I can prove it by Warde and Will. Every little while we stopped and made Pee-wee stand still so the compass wouldn't joggle, and made sure we were hiking straight west. I guess we were hiking through the woods about half an hour. And then we came out where there were fields. Away, way off we could see the smudge going straight up into the sky, only it wasn't west at all, it was way up north west. We all sat down on a stone wall.

"That's a blamed funny thing," Warde said.

"What the dickens do you suppose happened?" Will wanted to know.

Edgar said, "That smudge was straight west when we entered the woods, and we came straight west. Now it's way up north."

"Pee-wee's compass," Rinkey said.

Bud and Jay lay down on the ground, kicking up their legs and laughing—that's the way they always do, they're a couple of crazy Indians.

"Now I know what was the matter with the pigeons," Rinkey said; "they probably went by Pee-wee's compass."

The kid just stared, he didn't know what to say. "A compass has got to be right, so that shows there's something the matter with *us*," he said. "It's absolutely positively got to point to the North Pole. So that shows you didn't keep hiking straight."

"Sure we kept hiking straight," Edgar said. "Every two minutes we were checking up by the compass."

Rinkey said, "Well then, the only explanation is that the North Pole has moved. Maybe some aviator knocked it out of place."

"What's the difference?" Warde said. "As long as we can see where the smudge is we're all right."

"Yes but there are some more woods ahead of us," one of the other fellers said. "How are we going to know what way we're going when we get into the woods?"

“Trust to Pee-wee,” Bud said.

I said, “Well, as long as we’re sitting here on this stone wall let’s start having a concert.”

“Do you call that having a bee-line hike?” the kid wanted to know. “Do you think I’m going to spend all night getting back to camp?”

“Follow your compass and we’ll never get there,” Jay said.

So then I started up singing:

“We cannot hike to-day
For the North Pole moved away.”

Pee-wee started shouting, “Are you going to sit on this stone wall wasting time singing a lot of nonsense? Are you going to follow that smudge signal or not?”

I said, “If we follow it, it won’t be a bee-line hike. We came straight west and now we’d have to turn north. A scout’s honor is to be toasted. If he says he’ll go in a straight line he has to do it. The Silver Foxes cannot break their words. There’s nothing to do but sit here and sing. Do you fellers want to hear one of our songs?”

“Sure, shoot,” Bud said.

So then Warde and Will and I started up:

“We hiked and we got in a muddle,
We hiked and we got in a muddle;
We all made a bet
That we wouldn’t get wet
And we all went kerflop in a puddle.”

“How long are you going to stay here?” the kid wanted to know—he was good and mad.

“It may be for years,” I told him. “We want these new fellers to see what scouts really are, how they can stick to a solomon resolution. We can’t turn north. Starvation is better than dishonor. This is a bee-line hike, or boy scouts stalled on a stone wall.”

“We’re going to be getting hungry pretty soon,” the kid said. “Even now I’m getting hungry.”

“Tell us something we don’t know,” I said.

“How many verses have you got to that song?” Rinkey wanted to know.

“Eight billion, two hundred and fifty-seven million, three hundred and forty-’leven thousand, two hundred and fifty thirteen,” I told him. “It’s the Silver Fox Patrol anthem. Do you want to hear some more?”

“Sure,” he said.

“Go ahead,” Bud and Jay said.

“All right, one, two, three,” I said.

“We tried to jump over a fence,
We tried to jump over a fence;
Each felt like a wreck
When he fell on his neck
But the exercise sure was immense.”

I bet you're kind of wondering how long we sat on that stone wall. Don't worry, we were only getting Pee-wee excited. In the next chapter we'll be started off again. So long, see you later.

CHAPTER XXV

BAFFLED

All OF a sudden, *good night*, the smudge signal started moving. Honest, I don't know who was doing the hiking. *Laugh!*

"*Now you see, now you see!*" the kid shouted. "*Now you see if my compass was right. Now you see what's the matter; it's the smudge signal.*"

"It's trying to sneak away on us," Warde said.

Right away Bud and Jay must lie down on their backs and start shouting.

Rinkey said, "I had my doubts about a compass but I did think a camp smudge fire was to be trusted. I'm getting so I don't trust anything in scouting. Where do you suppose that smudge fire is going?"

"I think it's just taking a walk," I said. "I never knew one to do that before, I suppose nobody is watching it."

"Do you suppose it's coming here?" Rinkey wanted to know.

"Don't ask me," I told him. "Ask Pee-wee, he knows all about scouting, how smudge fires guide lost people home, how you absolutely, positively, definitely, surely, undoubtedly, certainly, most assuredly, can't possibly get lost even accidentally on purpose when you can locate a smudge signal."

"Where are we supposed to go anyway?" Rinkey said. "Do you suppose we might possibly get around in front of that smudge fire and head it off?"

Will said, "It looks to me as if it was on its way to Albany. Maybe it's got a date to guide some people home in the Canadian Rockies."

Rinkey said, "Well, I don't see how anything is going to be accomplished this way, playing tag with a smudge beacon. My understanding was that it was going to stay till we got there. I'm not criticizing the scouts, but are you sure the camp is there?"

By that time Warde and Will and Bud and Jay were all lying on the ground—boy, you never saw such a crazy bunch. Edgar was laughing so hard he could hardly sit on the stone wall. I said to the other two fellers, "How do you like scouting, so far?" They were just laughing.

"We're all having a good time anyway," I said. "Travel with the Silver Foxes and you'll never get anywhere. Talk about Alice in Wonderland!"

All of a sudden up jumped Pee-wee on the stone wall and he started straining his eyes at the beacon. "*I know what it is, I know what it is!*" he shouted. "It's a railroad train! It's the smoke from a locomotive!"

"That ought to be worth following," Rinkey said. "It's probably going somewhere."

Warde said, "I guess it's a freight, it was standing still for such a long time. Maybe it was on a siding, hey?"

"Where's the real signal?" Pee-wee shouted.

"I haven't got it," Rinkey said. "I'm willing to follow anything anywhere, but I'd like to know where I'm going. My understanding was it was a camp. A freight train is all right. Where do we go from here?"

"Now I bet something happened to Councilor Fretter," the kid said.

Will said, "I bet the Ford broke down again."

"Maybe it's the steaming radiator that we see," Rinkey said. "Maybe the best thing would be some more singing; it's nice and comfortable here."

Jiminies, I had to laugh. There we were sitting on the stone wall and sprawling around on the ground and we didn't know which way to go. A lot we cared! I guess we followed that black smoke for maybe five miles and now it was moving away up toward the north. We couldn't see any engine or cars or anything—just the smoke. Mostly I had to laugh on account of Rinkey, the way he took it. He said, "Do you know, I think if you're lost a stationary smudge is better."

I said, "Well, this is Pee-wee's bee-line hike where you absolutely definitely can't get lost. As long as he wants to show you fellers how scouts do when they're lost in the wilderness, Will and Warde and I will keep out of it."

Pee-wee said, "I think that Temple Camp is west from here. Let's keep going west."

"Suits me," Rinkey said.

"Will you please get up and start," Pee-wee shouted at the other fellows. "Do you think you can sprawl around laughing all the time when you're on a bee-line hike? That's what you learned from Roy Blakeley."

Warde said, "Have a care how you speak about Roy Buckeye, our gallant patrol leader."

I said, "The advantage of going every which way is that you always get there. Now you see for yourself what happens if you have a destination."

"Are you going to show these fellers about scouting or not?" the kid screamed at me.

I said, "Don't blame me, look at Bud and Jay, they're in your own patrol that you're starting, and even they can't stand on their feet and laugh—they have to laugh upside-down. Some patrol! Look at Rinkey McKidder, he's worse than I am if not better. Look at the other three of them—some bunch! You ought to name it the Laughing Hyenas."

"If you start singing again I'm going by myself," he said, good and mad.

"Is that a definite promise?" I asked him.

Boy, it was some job getting that bunch started. Anyway we kept on going west and after a little while we came to a railroad cut, it was a deep one. That was where the freight train had been going. "I can tell by the little particles of smoke that are left here," I said, "Roy Blackeye, the boy detective." The cut ran north and south, and if we were going to keep going west we would have to cross it. It was good and deep too, and the sides were straight up and down.

"Now what are we going to do?" I said.

"If you sit down and start singing, I'm going to hike all by myself," the kid shouted. "So I give you fair warning."

"Can't we even sit down while we're thinking how we're going to get across?" I asked him.

There was a water tower right there. I don't know if you call it a water tower, anyway it was a great big wooden tank up on a kind of a trestle work, and there was a very narrow iron ladder up the side of it. I guess it wasn't used any more, that's the way it looked to me.

Rinkey said, "I think there may be a skeleton of a murdered man in that. Shall we go up and look? Maybe I'll find one of my letters to Bud and Jay, they haven't heard from me in sometime. If I had a carrier pigeon I'd send him after the news-reel people. That thing looks kind of spooky to me."

"Anyway, there's a whole lot of things outside of it," I said. "I never saw so many things outside of a water tower."

"How are we going to get across?" the kid yelled.

"That's what we have to talk over patiently," Rinkey said.

"We may even have to sing some songs," I told him.

CHAPTER XXVI

AN ACCIDENT?

We were all sitting on the grass again, looking all around to see if we could see the camp smudge anywhere. Jiminies, we didn't know what could have happened to Councilor Fretter.

"How do you like bee-line hikes?" I asked Rinkey.

"I'll never go on any other kind after this," he said.

Pretty soon a couple of fellers went over and looked at the water tower and they said it wasn't used any more, they said it was all rotten and wouldn't hold water. One of them said the iron ladder was kind of just hooked over the top. The two of them lifted it up. So then we decided to put it down the side of the cut and hook it on a root that was sticking out near the top. Then we could go down one by one, and then fix it up against the other side and go up it. "It's a cinch," they said.

So that's the way we did, we hooked it onto the root and went down one by one. Then we lifted it across to the other side and got it hooked into the earth up top. But, good night, the first one that went up didn't get there because it didn't hold fast and it came down all crumpled up. It was all rusty, I guess it was rotten. So there we were in the cut.

Rinkey said, "It's too bad this cut has two sides to it."

"Yes and we better look out if a train comes along," Pee-wee said. "And you two brothers better not lie down on your backs and start laughing either. And you better not start any songs."

"Boy, I'm thinking it's kind of bad in here," Edgar said. "This place isn't wide. I hope a train doesn't come along."

We looked both ways along the cut and it was deep as far away as we could see. We pressed ourselves close against one side to see if we could make sure whether there was room for us if a train did come. I didn't know if there was or not. We all said there was room, but we couldn't be dead sure. I was thinking about one time when I was in a train and I could of stuck my arm out of the window and touched someone in a kind of a cut we were going through. Oh boy, it gave me the creeps thinking about that. Because where we were there was only one track and we couldn't get out of the way.

"Sure, they always leave room enough," one of those friends of Rinkey's said. "It's pretty close, but there's room enough if you stand flat against the side."

Edgar said, "Yes, but sometimes the engine is shooting out steam or sparks. The sooner we get out of here the better I'll like it."

"Same here," I said.

"But how are we going to get out?" Will wanted to know.

Warde said, "We might take a chance and walk along till we come to a place where we can climb up. We should worry about hiking bee-line now. Right here the cut runs through a hill, it ought to be lower a little way along."

"One thing sure," I said, "we're going to get wet even if we don't get killed. Look how black the sky is getting, and it's starting to blow up."

Believe me, it was. We didn't get much wind down in the cut but things were blowing down into it, leaves and pieces off trees and everything. Even a rotten chunk of wood from that old water tower blew down.

"It's blamed funny about the smudge fire at camp," Warde said.

"Maybe we couldn't see it down here anyway," Will said. "Come on, let's hustle and get out of here, I don't like this."

We didn't do much talking, we just hurried along in the cut looking for a place where we could climb out. We kept looking back in case of a train coming. Even Pee-wee didn't have anything to say. It must have been pretty windy up above because we could even hear trees crackling and splitting. "Keep listening for a train," I said; "keep looking both ways, because when they come they come quick."

"Do you think they'd whistle?" Pee-wee asked us.

"Blamed if I know," I said. "But I think we'll get blown away when we get out of here."

"That's better than being run over," Rinkey said.

"Good night to the bee-line hike," Bud said.

"Yes and don't lie down on your back whatever you do," I told him.

Pee-wee stopped to pick up a bird's nest that blew down with a little branch of a tree.

"Never mind about that," we told him. I thought he was going to start giving us a lecture on birds. "Come on, hustle. Do you hear a whistle?"

"That's not a whistle," Jay said, "don't get excited."

"Well this place looks too narrow for me," I told him.

It wasn't so much fun running along in that place and keeping a lookout both ways. Anyway I guess the black sky and the wind kind of made it seem worse. All the time we kept thinking we heard a train.

"Another thing I'll never trust is ladders," Rinkey said.

"Not one way ladders anyway," I told him. "Just the same you're going to see a fact of nature pretty soon. It's going to be some storm. I guess you'll all be sorry you ever got in with Temple Camp scouts."

“Even I can start a fire in the rain,” the kid said. “Even smudge signals are better in the rain.”

“The one they forgot to start is good enough for me,” Rinkey said. “It’s the best one I ever didn’t follow. It’s wonderful—scouting.”

“I’ll bet you’ll say you had enough of it,” I laughed.

“Not so you’d notice it,” Bud said.

“I’m in for the finish,” Jay panted.

“Same here,” Edgar said.

I said, “I bet you’re sorry you didn’t send that letter to me by carrier pigeon, then I wouldn’t have got it.”

“Sure, that’s a good way to send school exams,” Jay said.

“Where Rinkey goes, we go,” that feller named Stubby Waite said.

“Let it blow, what do we care?” Bud said.

“Sure,” Rinkey said, “maybe the pigeon will blow in.”

All the while we were hurrying along looking for a place where we could get out.

“Now you see how scouts follow smudge signals,” I said.

“Don’t you call it scouting to be *baffled*?” the kid shouted. “Now it shows how we got to have resources to get back. Maybe a smudge fire is better because you don’t see it. Now we got to do things by prowess.”

“Sure,” I said, “the best kind of a smudge beacon is one that ain’t, you can follow it so easy. It’s the same as school only different, the best studies are the ones that are left out.”

“Can you use resources if they get wet?” Rinkey wanted to know.

“It doesn’t hurt ’em if they get a little damp,” I said; “not as long as you’re baffled.”

Pretty soon we came to a place where there was a lot of brush growing down over the top of the cut. It was on the side we wanted to climb up, too. “Here’s where we get out,” I said.

“I think I hear a train, too,” the kid said. “I can tell by putting my ear to the track.”

“Don’t bother,” Rinkey said, “if it hits you you’ll know it. That’s the best way to be absolutely positively sure.”

“He trusts a train,” Jay said.

“I never knew it to fail if you sit on the track,” Rinkey said.

“Sure, it’s a fact of nature,” Bud said.

“Yes and if you and Jay lie down on the track and start laughing it’s two facts of nature,” I told him. “Come on, let’s see if we can scramble up here,” I said.

I reached up and grabbed hold of the brush and it sort of pulled away, but I grabbed it quick with my other hand and just made it. “It’s easy, come

ahead,” I said. “All you have to do is use a couple of scout resources.”

Boy, but it was blowing hard up there, it was a regular cyclone. Honest, I was scared to stand too near the edge, it was blowing so hard. “Look out for burrs,” I called down to them. “Look out you don’t get your fingers cut.”

My hat blew down into the cut but I told them not to bother running after it. The next one up was Bud and he made it all right—so did Jay, he came rolling over the brush up top. They’re a couple of monkeys, that pair. Rinkey he reached up kind of easy going and he went sprawling back into the cut.

“You can’t hike up, you’ve got to scramble up,” I shouted down to him. “Do you think you’re taking a walk?”

“I don’t think that bush is to be trusted,” he said.

Anyway he got up all right, but gee he’s lazy, always taking his time.

“I had supper en route,” he said. I had to laugh, he had a couple of burrs in his mouth.

“You’ve got a grasshopper in your hair too,” I told him. “Feel in your pockets, you may have a couple of hoptoads or something.”

“I dropped a couple of resources somewhere,” he said.

“Well, you’re up anyway,” I told him.

He was brushing himself off. He said, “I don’t see the camp smudge anywhere, do you?”

Pee-wee was the last one to come because he had to run after my hat. I told him not to but he went chasing it along the cut.

Just then, I don’t know, I guess it was the way the wind was blowing, but I heard a train whistle good and loud. In a minute I heard it again and it sounded far off. It was getting darker and darker in the sky. Even branches were splitting off in trees right close to us. A little way along the cut there was a wheat field and the wheat was all bending way over toward the cut. Further off we could see a white house.

“Come on, hurry up,” I shouted to Pee-wee. “There’s a house and we can get to it before it rains if you hurry. Never mind my hat.”

So then he came running but I didn’t see him scramble up because, *good night*, I saw something else that gave me the shudders. I was the only one that saw it because the others were watching Pee-wee. Away off in that wheat field I saw a man running through the wheat. I couldn’t see him so plain on account of the tall wheat, but anyway he was going good and fast and he jumped right into the cut—or else he fell into it. All of a sudden I saw it, kind of. It was getting so dark and the wind was blowing so hard that first I thought maybe I was “seeing things.” But all the same I knew that I saw that.

And just then I heard a train whistle way far off.

CHAPTER XXVII

PEE-WEE IN DANGER

Anyway, I didn't think about it again because on account of what happened. Believe me, those fellers did see some scouting, and I don't mean helping old ladies across the street either. Gee it gives me the creeps now.

One feller was reaching over trying to give Pee-wee a hand while the kid was scrambling up, holding onto the brush. The next thing I knew I heard somebody scream and then I heard Pee-wee fall, and he screamed too. Then I heard somebody yell, "*Look out for him, look out for him, he went down!*" Then another feller said, "There he is—*look!* Get a rock *quick!*"

When I looked down Pee-wee was standing right plunk in the middle of the railroad track with his foot on a big snake. Lucky for him his foot was right near the snake's head, because, *oh boy*, I heard the sound and it was a rattler—it was a good big one. It was curled up around his other leg. The way it was he couldn't move either leg. He was just standing so he couldn't move. *And did he look scared!*

I guess the snake had been in that brush all the time, and maybe the kid had grabbed hold of it when he was scrambling up. Anyway Edgar said he saw Pee-wee fall and then he saw the snake fall out of the brush. The first I saw was the kid right in the middle of the track like I said.

"Keep your foot down tight," I shouted. Lucky for him he had shoes with plates on the soles.

Gee, the way things happened I can't tell you. There he was, standing plunk in the middle of the track all tangled up with that thing and he couldn't move, and a train was whistling, and the wind was blowing so hard toward the cut that we had to be careful going near the edge. I was holding on to a tree to keep from being blown down in.

All of a sudden Will Dawson grabbed hold of the brush so as to let himself down, and Rinkey threw a rock down for him to use. "Smash his head with it," he said to Will. Some excitement!

"Listen," Edgar said.

"Sure, it's coming," I said. "Look how the smoke is blowing way up past that wheat field."

I meant the train. It was coming like the dickens too.

All of a sudden I heard a rattling—gee I know that sound all right. Will jumped back and I saw another snake sticking right up out of the brush,

hissing. I guess there was a nest of them there. “Can’t get down that way,” Will said.

The train began sounding good and loud, we could hear it kind of clanking on the rails. Away along in the cut smoke was coming up and blowing away. Pee-wee started calling “*Help!*”

None of us could go down holding on to the brush, that was sure. If you see two snakes, that means there’s a nest of them. Nix on that brush. I could see the kid was trying to walk, while he kept one foot tight on the snake’s neck. But he couldn’t do it. He was getting all excited, shouting, “*Help, help, help!*” I thought he’d have to take a chance and lift his foot to get off the track no matter what the snake did. Sometimes the bite doesn’t kill you. Anyway he’d have to take a chance.

The next thing, I heard the sound of a train, like cars clanking and knocking together, like when a train is going to stop. Just then Jay Walker jumped right off the edge down into the cut—boy, that was some jump! Right away I grabbed hold of Bud because always the two of them do the same thing. I saw Jay jump up from where he fell and go limping over to Pee-wee with the rock in his hand. That was the end of the rattlesnake. The poor kid just sank right down on the tracks.

“Save him and we’ll skin him,” Bud shouted down. “Don’t sling him away.” Some pair, they keep animals dead or alive. Honest, you could paper a room with the skins they had on their barn door.

“He didn’t bite him, did he?” Warde called. Because the kid was just lying there, kind of wriggling his leg.

“No, he didn’t bite me but he hugged me good and hard,” the kid shouted.

“I don’t blame him,” I called. “Everybody wants to hug you.”

“It’s his curly hair that gets them,” Rinkey said.

“I’m going to jump,” said Bud.

“No you’re not going to jump either,” I told him. “Can’t you see your brother even hurt his leg? The kid’s all right. I think the train must have stopped or something. Come on, let’s go along the edge and maybe we can find another place. Nix on this brush.”

IMAGE OMITTED DUE TO COPYRIGHT RESTRICTIONS

PEE-WEE WAS STANDING WITH HIS FOOT ON A BIG SNAKE.

“Now you see the kind of fellers I got for my patrol,” the kid shouted. “Now he’s going to get a medal, Jay is. Now you see the way rattlesnakes do.”

“Personally I prefer crazy nonsense,” Rinkey said.

“I always said it was better,” I told him.

He said, “If Bud and Jay find the railroad train they’ll want to take that home with them too. It’s a wonder to me that their father doesn’t put them out.”

“I doubt if he’ll ever see us again,” Bud said. “Not when we go on one of your bee-line hikes.”

“So far I kind of like scouting,” Rinkey said.

“It’s all right if you don’t weaken,” I told him. “You get storms and rattlesnakes and cyclones and everything thrown in.”

“Everything except smudge signals,” he said.

I told him, “You missed the best part of it in Dawdleboro.”

Warde called down to Pee-wee and Jay and told them to go along in the cut and keep over close to the side, and we’d go along on top. We didn’t hear the train at all any more. We went along till we came to the place where the wheat field went right to the edge of the cut. Pee-wee and Jay kept even with us down below. The wheat was growing so close to the edge that we had to hold it away while we went by so as not to trample on it.

All of a sudden Pee-wee shouted out loud like he does all excited, “*There’s a dead man, there’s a dead man! He’s lying on the tracks! A little way ahead he’s lying on the tracks! There’s a dead man!*”

“Lucky for us in one way,” Rinkey said. “I guess that’s why the train stopped. Maybe another train ran over him. Probably it was the one that sent up the smudge we were following.”

“I saw a man go over the edge,” I said. “We were so excited I didn’t say anything about it. I think he fell in. Maybe he got killed that way.”

“Jay didn’t get killed that way,” Bud said.

“I never knew either one of you to get killed yet,” Rinkey said. “When I see you get killed I’ll believe it.”

“If we ever do we’ll tell you,” Bud said.

CHAPTER XXVIII

AN EAGLE SCOUT

“There’s the train standing still way up the track,” Pee-wee shouted to us.

“That’s the reason,” I cried.

Looking over the edge we could see the man lying right on the tracks quite a way ahead. Pee-wee and Jay started running, only Jay fell behind because he had to limp. Pee-wee was the first to get there. Already there were a lot of people from the train there. When we got alongside, up on top of the cut, a man who was laughing picked the dead man up awful easy and threw him at Pee-wee. Then everybody started laughing.

“*Good night!*” I said, “*It’s a scarecrow!*”

“I’ll never believe in dead men again,” Rinkey said, “they’re like smudge signals!”

Laugh! Oh boy, did we laugh! There was Pee-wee standing with that crazy looking thing hanging over his shoulder.

I shouted, “Hey kid, if it isn’t too late try some first aid.”

We could scramble down there all right, so we joined the party. There were several ladies and four or five kids and the conductor and the engineer—gee, there was a whole crowd. Even one man was a doctor and he was having a good laugh.

I said, “This is Pee-wee Harris of the Boy Scouts and he knows all about first aid, also finding out if people are still breathing. If he can be any help, his middle name is good turns. He knows all about what to do if scarecrows are bleeding to death. Even he can bring you back to life if you die laughing.”

Warde said, “If we could only find a hospital or an ash barrel. Do you think you can carry him, kid? Look out, don’t let his head hang down.” All the time Pee-wee was trying to pull the scarecrow off of him. He said, “Haven’t you got better sense than to laugh about being killed even if it isn’t really getting killed?”

I said, “Hey kid, now you’ve got the last member for your patrol, *some scout*, he saved your life. Let’s take him to camp with us, that’ll make eight new fellers.”

We had to hurry up then on account of the rain and we took the scarecrow with us. We just got to that white house in time, when down it came. There wasn’t anyone around but anyway we stood under a shed till

the shower was over. We picked up a label that said Eagle Brand Condensed Milk and I fastened it on the scarecrow.

“Now you’ve got an Eagle scout in your new patrol,” I said. “Now you see what it means to go hiking with the Silver-plated Foxes. By rights he ought to get the life saving medal too, because he stopped the train. *Some boy scout.*”

Boy, that was some shower but when it stopped the wind died down and the sun came out nice and clear.

“If we only knew which way to go,” I said.

Will said, “Let’s go the other way.”

“What do you mean the other way?” the kid wanted to know.

Rinkey said, “That’s a good idea; whichever way we decide to go, we’ll go the other way.”

I said, “Let’s try north for a change. If we don’t like that we’ll go south. If we try all the different ways we’re sure to get there.”

Warde said, “It’s like Pee-wee eating all the three different kinds of dessert. That way he’s sure to get the one he wants.”

“I’m sure to get a lot of crazy fools when I go hiking,” the kid said.

“Look at the fine new patrol you got,” I said; “eight new fellers and one of them is an Eagle Scout.”

“Yes and you needn’t think we’re going to carry that thing all the way to Temple Camp,” he shouted at me. “An old coat with a lot of straw in it, and a hunk of wood with an old hat on it, and shoes fixed on sticks with pants to cover them—you needn’t think we’re going to take that to Temple Camp like a lot of fools, *geeee whiz!*”

“And that’s the way you speak of the one that stopped the train and saved your life!” I said. “The feller that just blew into the cut in time!”

Rinkey said, “Here’s a good conundrum. Why won’t we take the scarecrow to Temple Camp?”

“Why?” I asked him.

“Because we’re never going to get to Temple Camp,” he said.

“Don’t be too sure,” I told him. “But it’s a good idea, let’s tell conundrums. Why is Pee-wee like a smudge signal? Because you can’t even see him.”

Bud said, “Here’s a good one; why is a hike?”

Jay said, “Here’s a good one; if you’re on a bee-line hike how can you do a good turn?”

“It can’t be done,” I told him. “But if it’s a straight hike how can Pee-wee get all wound up while he’s on it? Just the same as when he’s following a trail he goes up in the air. He claims to know all about scouting and stalking, he doesn’t even know what kind of birds lay Easter eggs. And he’s

starting a new patrol! It's a wonder to me that real scouts like the solid Silver Foxes ever take him along."

"*That shows, that shows!*" Pee-wee screamed as loud as he could. "That shows how much you haven't got to do with scouting at all because you're nothing but clowns, even our scoutmaster says so, and now you're standing here even after it stops raining and making a fool of yourself in front of new members because I can prove how you told new members that a scout jamboree means where you have to bring jam and even they brought two jars, you think you're so smart, and you got a good calling down for it—*geeeee whiz!*"

"Who ate the jam?" Warde asked him.

"We did it for your sake," I said. "A spout helps a brother spout. United we stand——"

"*Are you going to come ahead?*" he screamed at me. "If you don't I'm going to start by myself."

"Which way are you going to go?" I asked him.

"I'm going to go away from here," he shouted.

"That's a good place to go to," Rinkey said.

"I never thought of that," I said; "come on, let's start."

Rinkey said, "There are just ten of us. Let's each one go a different way like spokes of a wheel, and one of us is sure to get to that camp. Then he can start a smudge fire and the rest can all hike toward it no matter where they are. It's known as a *scatter hike*."

I said, "I know something better, a *spatter hike*, you step in every puddle you come to."

By that time Bud and Jay were lying on their backs laughing.

"Why don't you sing a song?" Edgar said.

"That's a good idea, I never thought of it," I told him.

At that Pee-wee started off, very dignified like, all by himself.

I called, "Where you going, kid?" But he didn't pay any attention.

We were all going to start out of the shed to follow him when, *good night*, away way off a big thin line of smoke rose up. Jiminies, it looked good to me.

"There it is," I shouted.

"The councilor must have got his Ford started," Edgar said.

"Hey kid, come back and tell us where that smudge is," I shouted after Pee-wee. "Come back so we can get a squint at your compass—absolutely positively no singing."

CHAPTER XXIX

SERIOUS BUSINESS

That was southwest, that smudge signal, and it was good and plain. So we had been hiking pretty nearly the right way all the time. We made a bee-line toward it, and it took us about an hour to get to the Hudson. We had to go through woods and across fields, and one place was all swampy but we got across stepping on stones. Where we came out at the Hudson it was all woods like and we sat down on the shore to wait for the launch that Councilor Fretter said would be cruising around for us. Pretty soon it came chugging up the river and we hailed it. We knew the man that was running it, he was Corry Jenks who is steward at the Boat Club. Everybody up at camp knows him. He had his son along with him, he's fifteen years old.

So that's really the end of our hike—some hike, hey? Only you better go on reading because something more is going to happen. Don't go away, whatever you do. We didn't need the smudge signal any more, either, because on the other side of the river was a big seven passenger touring car waiting for us. Gee, it looked good to me. Right away I knew that car because Mr. John Temple's colored chauffeur was sitting in it. I never even knew Mr. Temple was supposed to come up to camp that day.

I said to Jim Tibbels (he's the chauffeur) I said, "What's the idea sending the big Pierce Arrow down to meet us?"

He just kind of laughed and he said, "Misser Temple he up to de camp, he got impotent business wib Masser Pee-wee."

"*Now you see, now you see!*" the kid shouted. He was shouting for the sake of those six fellers that we had with us. "Now you see if I'm important that they're all the time laughing at me—the Silver Foxes—*now you see*, even the man that's got a million dollars that started Temple Camp, even he wants to see me. So that shows if I amount to something at Temple Camp. Even Mr. Temple wants to see me and he's a magnet!^[1] So now are you going to join my patrol?"

I had to laugh at the kid but, honest, I felt kind of sorry for him too. All day long we had been kidding him like we always do. And he was wanting these new fellers to think he was a regular scout so they wouldn't take him for a joke. That was what made him so mad, that we were kidding the life out of him in front of those fellers.

"Now you see if I amount to something," he said. "Now you see who's a really truly scout because even Mr. Temple wants to see me. Now you're

going to see real scouts that track and stalk and everything, so will you promise absolutely sure to join my patrol and we'll fix it so you can stay at camp."

I said, "Hey Tibby, what does Mr. Temple want to see him about?"

Tibby said, "I got strick orders not to say nuthin'."

"I bet maybe they want to take my picture," Pee-wee said. "On account of my being a typical scout." Once before they had done that at camp—I have to admit the kid is good in a picture.

Oh boy, it was good to get in that car, believe me we filled it up. As long as there were six fellers coming up to stay at Guest Cabin, Tiny Jenks' father let him go too. "Can I join it too?" the poor little kid wanted to know.

"Sure you can," Pee-wee said, "so now I got seven fellers, I got a full patrol, and if you're a scout you got to always keep your word so if you say you'll join my patrol you got to do it. So do you say so, absolutely positively cross your hearts?"

I had to laugh because always everybody kids him.

I said, "Don't miss it, it's a chance of a lifetime."

All the while Tibby was driving the car he kept laughing.

"So are you going to join my new patrol?" Pee-wee kept up. "Are you going to listen to crazy Silver Foxes, or are you going to join my patrol? Because now you got to decide. Now you got to decide if you're going to be real scouts and not a lot of nonsensical Indians."

I said, "Those are harsh words, Scout Harris. You'll be sorry that you're glad you live to regret that you're happy, you'll suffer remorse for saying that."

"The Silver Foxes are more to be pitied than blamed," Warde said.

"Sure, whenever we have to take Pee-wee with us," Will said.

"You don't have to because I'm going to have a patrol of my own," the kid shouted. "And you needn't put me in your crazy stories any more, either."

"I'm positively going to join that patrol," Rinkey said. "A patrol wouldn't be a patrol without Scout Harris. You can count me in. I told my mother not to expect me till she sees me—not even then. Here's my hand, Scout Harris."

"Give him the infernal handclasp," I said.

"He means fraternal," the kid shouted.

"Stick your right foot in your left pocket and hold your thumbs to your ears and promise to obey your patrol leader," Will said.

"How about you Edgar?" Warde said.

"I'm in," Edgar said.

"Same here," Bud said.

“Me too,” Jay chimed in.

“O.K. with us,” the other two fellers promised.

“Do you positively promise?” Pee-wee shouted.

“Your comrades in misery are going to stick with you,” Rinkey said. “It’s a new patrol and we’re it.”

“Can I be *it* too,” poor little Tiny Jenks asked, kind of scared like.

“If you promise to stay in,” the kid said. “Do you cross your heart?”

I had to laugh because Pee-wee’s never sure of new members. He has them digging up herbs to eat and I guess their mothers don’t like it. One feller had to leave the Chipmunks because Pee-wee made some Indian pudding out of moss ground up just like the Indians used to do. But he sure had some peachy members at last. Rinkey, he was crazy enough even to be in my patrol. And Bud and Jay—*good night!* Edgar was all right, too, only kind of quiet. So were the other two fellers—I could see they were crazy about Rinkey. I have to admit they made a dandy patrol.

“You can’t change your minds,” Pee-wee said.

“Where you go, we go,” Bud said.

“Sure, right side up, or upside down,” I told the kid. “The Walker brothers ought to make good trackers, they’re always on the ground.”

“Now pretty soon we’re going to get to camp, so do you promise?” Pee-wee asked them.

“Sure we do,” Rinkey said, kind of serious for him. “We’re all going to visit Temple Camp and we’re going to get together and make a patrol, and stick together. Never mind where we live. We’re all going to fix it so we can spend the rest of the summer at camp. We’ll have to go home and get some things and fix it with our folks, but I’m good in handling parents. After a day like this we’re going to *stick* and I don’t mean maybe. Is that what we all say? It’s O.K. with Bud and Jay and me—their folks will be glad to get rid of them. And I can answer for this Poughkeepsie team, too, who follow me around. When the season closes we’ll plan out some way of sticking together; I never worry about the day after to-morrow. So it’s a go, Scout Harris?”

“United you stand,” I started saying.

“Do you all promise?” the kid asked them.

“A scout’s honor is to be toasted,” I told him.

[1] Magnate, he probably meant.

CHAPTER XXX TWO HELPINGS

When we got to camp a big crowd was waiting for us around Administration Shack—we reminded ourselves of Lindbergh in the big parade when he arrived in New York. Councilor Fretter was there and, just as we thought, the old camp car had broken down. That's why we didn't see the smudge sooner.

"Hurrah for Scout Harris, the boy detective!" all the scouts were shouting. "Hey kid, how's the gorilla? Did you discover any more murders on the way back?"

"I discovered a dandy new patrol that I'm starting, and that's better than gorillas," Pee-wee shouted at them.

All the scouts were looking at those new fellers; especially they looked at Rinkey; I guess maybe it was because he was bigger. He sure did look as if he'd make a fine scout.

"Hey kid, you're wanted in the office!" they told him.

"You're appointed new resident director of the camp," one of them said.

"Hey kid, Mr. Temple wants you to go to Europe as a model scout," another one said.

"We'll hike there with you," I told him.

"We'll make it a bee-line hike," Warde said.

"Hey Pee-wee," another scout called, "did you hear the glad news? You're elected President of the Boy Scouts of America."

Another one shouted, "Hey Pee-wee, I understand they want you to give demonstrations of eating two desserts at the same time."

"I'm going to give a demonstration of the best patrol in this camp," he shouted at them, "and I got three fellers that know all about carrier pigeons and we're going to use them in our patrol and one feller hiked all the way from Poughkeepsie and I'm going to have him get the Pathfinders Badge and two of them have got a raccoon so maybe we'll name it the Raccoons and one of them broke his collar-bone but he is all right now."

I said, "He has to thank the Silver Foxes for all this. They made him what he is to-morrow."

"He has to thank my collar-bone," Edgar said.

"Now we don't have to take him around with us any more," Will said.

"And I don't want to go either," Pee-wee said. "*Gee whiz*, look at the kind of a patrol that I've got, and you needn't anybody try to get any of them

away from me either because we got a solemn vow cross their hearts how they're going to stick, and scouts have to keep their words no matter what."

Jiminies, I didn't know why all the scouts were laughing like a lot of laughing hyenas. Everybody laughs at Pee-wee, but it seemed kind of different the way they were all standing around and sitting on the porch rail and laughing. "Some crazy bunch," that's what I said to Rinkey.

One of them said, "Hey Pee-wee, go on inside, Mr. Temple wants to see you."

"Santa Claus is here," another one shouted.

"Hey kid, go on and see the Christmas tree."

I said, "What's the idea, anyway?"

"They're giving Pee-wee a shower," somebody said.

If the President of the United States wanted to shake hands with him Pee-wee wouldn't be surprised. Even they elected him boy mayor once. They use him to exhibit. He just marched into the office and I said to the new fellers, "Come on in, you have to sign in the guests' register." A lot of camp scouts came in too, and a lot of them stood around the door and a lot were at the porch window. They were all laughing.

The first thing I saw when I got into the office were seven poor little fellers sitting in a row on a bench. I knew they came from Bridgeboro (that's where we live) because I knew a couple of them. They all come from Slumtown, that's down in the east end near the river. Mr. Temple was there, too, talking with a couple of councilors.

As soon as he saw Pee-wee he said, "Ah, at last, here's the scoutmaker himself, in person! Just the scout we want to see! You see, Scout Harris, what I've brought you? The Elks of Bridgeboro are sending these seven youngsters *to you*. When those gentlemen decided to give a summer's outing to some poor boys of our town I came right back at them and said, 'Why up at Temple Camp, there's a real scout all dressed up and no place to go, as the saying is; a real scout who has everything except a patrol.' I said to those gentlemen, 'Look here, make it seven, and there's a scout up there—you know him—there's a scout up there who'll take that bunch and turn them out A-1 scouts. You have them all picked out and ready and they can ride up with me when I go.' So here they are, one full patrol counting your distinguished self. Raw material, but we know what you can do with raw material. Your native town of Bridgeboro, its Social Council, and the Elks, present these seven youngsters to you as a tribute to your services in scouting. When a scout is given a duty to perform, he does it. Am I right, Councilor Wainwright?"

Councilor Wainwright said, "Absolutely."

It's lucky there's a long bench in Administration Shack and if it hadn't been for that I guess Bud and Jay would have had their fit on the floor.

Rinkey said, "I'll never trust a patrol again."

Pee-wee just kind of stood there, gaping.

"*Good night*, Pee-wee gets two helpings as usual," I said.

Rinkey said, "I seem to remember making a solemn vow."

"I know I crossed my heart a couple of times," Edgar said.

I said, "Maybe I only dreamed it but I thought I heard something about a scout keeping his word."

Warde said, "You can drown the ones you don't want, kid."

Rinkey said, "Can anybody tell me the best way to get to Poughkeepsie without a smudge signal?"

Bud and Jay, they were just lying on the couch, laughing and laughing—you know the way they do. Even Mr. Temple was laughing at them. Poor little Tiny Jenks looked kind of scared.

I said, "Follow Pee-wee if you want to be scouts."

"And whatever you do *stick*," Warde said.

"Am I to blame if I get appointed by the Elks?" Pee-wee started shouting. "*Geeeee whiz*, am I to blame if I got civilized—civic—things to do on account of where I live in Bridgeboro—how I know all about scouting? Do you think I don't have to mind Mr. Temple *who owns this camp*? Did I know these fellers were here waiting for me when I started a new patrol? And you fellers—Bud and Jay—you better sit up in Administration Shack in front of Mr. Temple and councilors and people like that, you better stop your crazy nonsense in here—I'm warning you, you better stop."

Mr. Temple was awful nice. He said those fellers that hiked with us should stay in Guest Cabin for a week, if they wanted to. And he said he hoped they could fix it to come to Temple Camp to stay all summer. He said he didn't see how they could be a patrol with Pee-wee for keeps because they lived in so many different places. I bet Rinkey was thinking that all the time, only he kind of wanted to please Pee-wee. Bud and Jay, I don't think they ever care what happens to them, they get fun out of everything. Anyway they all stayed at Guest Cabin that night and we had a lot of fun at campfire. Boy, but all the scouts at camp liked Rinkey!

He was awful funny at campfire. The next day they went away, only Mr. Temple fixed it so little Tiny Jenks could stay all summer. But Rinkey and Bud and Jay are coming up next season, and Edgar too, that's what he says. "Don't bring any geese with you," I told him. "You didn't know what you were up against when you sent me that letter. You better send the next one by carrier pigeon, then I'll be sure not to get it."

If you want to know about Pee-wee's new patrol you'll find them all up at Temple Camp next season, with him bossing them around. The pleasure is yours and many of them. But you needn't come to me with some kind of a crazy new hike because I know where there's a landslide and we're going to slide down and see what we bunk into, and already I've got eight fellers and that's fifteen too many. And Westy Martin says it would be a good idea to go out in a boat and let it drift from the middle of the lake and start hiking from wherever it lands. So maybe the next you hear from us we'll be stalled in Kerrigan's Swamp and I'll be the only member of my patrol alive—no such luck. Maybe we'll be hiking up Shadow Mountain across the lake, how do we know? If you never hear of us again you'll know we went on a one way hike and we're still going. But most of them are round trips or square trips or straight trips or crooked trips—anyway we have a lot of fun, we should worry.

So long, I'll see you later.

THE END

[The end of *Roy Blakeley's Wild Goose Chase* by Percy Keese Fitzhugh]